



Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange

*Best Practices in Local Integration for
Receiving Communities & Newcomers*

by Hannah Winnick

November 2018



This report was produced following extensive interviews with participants in the Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange and in collaboration with partners at Cultural Vistas and Welcoming America.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Winnick is the founding director of the Democracy Program of the Heinrich Böll Foundation North America in Washington, DC. The program fosters transatlantic dialogue on shared challenges to democracy between the US and Germany/Europe and, since launching in 2015, has focused extensively on issues of migration, diversity, and minority rights as core elements of democratic societies.

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Located in Washington, DC, the Heinrich Böll Stiftung North America is a regional office of the [Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung](#), a political foundation affiliated with the Green Party of Germany and headquartered in Berlin. The foundation acts as a catalyst for green visions and projects, a think tank for policy reform, and an international network. We work with 200 project partners in over 60 countries and currently maintain 32 international offices.

The foundation seeks to advance democracy and human rights, protect the environment and climate, and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts. We also place particular emphasis on gender democracy, in pursuit of social emancipation and equal rights for women and LGBTI communities. We promote policy reform and political dialogue in our program areas through publications, fellowships, conferences, workshops, study tours and visitor programs.

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THE WELCOMING COMMUNITIES TRANSATLANTIC EXCHANGE

In 2015, the international community began to grasp the historic scale of global displacement and migration. By the end of that year, more than 60 million people had been forcibly displaced—a population approximately the size of Italy or the United Kingdom, larger than at any other time in history. Among the largest displaced populations were nationals from Syria, Afghanistan, Colombia, Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Yemen, and many desperately sought to make their way to Europe.ⁱ In August 2015, more than 130,000 people arrived in Europe by land and sea in a single month, a number that would quickly escalate to more than 200,000 by October of 2015.ⁱⁱ

In response, in late August 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a suspension of the Dublin Regulations for Syrian nationals. The suspension stopped forcible returns to the first port of entry in the EU, effectively allowing Syrians (and, de facto, many other nationals) to seek asylum in Germany. The new policy had direct consequences for German cities and towns as thousands of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, as well as Albanians, Kosovars, and others arrived each day. They required housing, food, medical care, and legal assistance. Volunteers described regularly receiving calls at midnight, requesting hundreds more beds by early morning. At the height of the humanitarian crisis, more prosperous states like Baden-Württemberg received 500 people a day—185,000 people in a single year.ⁱⁱⁱ Yet beyond the immediate concerns of shelter and food, many local German officials began to consider the long-term challenges of integrating hundreds of thousands of newcomers into schools, workforces, and communities—and sought to win the receiving community's support in this process.

In order to address the specific local challenges of long-term integration, Cultural Vistas, Welcoming America, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation North America launched the **Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange (WCTE)** in the fall of 2015. The program sought to connect German cities with US cities to help share best practices in refugee and immigrant integration and in engaging receiving communities, which were often apprehensive of newcomers. As the political situation evolved, with fewer migrants and refugees arriving in Germany and the existence of the refugee resettlement program fundamentally threatened in the US, the exchange also became an important forum for solidarity and inspiration for local integration practitioners committed to building welcoming communities.

From 2016 to 2018, the WCTE brought together annual cohorts of more than 40 individuals from nine US and German communities. Over the course of two 10-day trips to the US and Germany, participants visited each other's cities, shared challenges and lessons learned, and explored innovative approaches to local integration initiatives. They covered topics including affordable housing, job training and placement, school integration, language learning, interfaith dialogue, and broader social and cultural integration. They also discussed how to address local backlash and implement rapid-response communications. While the exchange initially focused on learning from the experiences of refugee integration, it soon became apparent that there were many lessons to be shared among the two countries related to other migrant groups, including EU nationals, unaccompanied children, and the undocumented.

The program's participants represented city governments and agencies, non-profits and social services, immigrant and refugee organizations, faith communities, local businesses, law enforcement, and others who work to integrate refugees and immigrants in their local communities and to engage receiving communities in the welcoming process. WCTE participants were selected to represent this diversity of local experiences. They brought a unique understanding of the challenges facing local communities on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as a commitment to cultivating the positive potential of increasingly diverse communities.

At the close of each year, each participating community created an action plan to integrate new insights from the exchange into their local welcoming work. The following case studies highlight some of the most exciting and promising projects and policies that emerged from this rich transatlantic exchange, as well as the challenges local communities continue to face.

Funders and Program Partners

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2016-2018 US Communities

2016

Atlanta, GA
Boise, ID
St. Louis, MO
Columbus, Dayton
& Toledo, OH

2017

Detroit, MI
Los Angeles, CA
Nashville, TN*
Salt Lake County, UT*

2018

Anchorage, AL
Boston, MA
Charlotte, NC
Montgomery County, MD



2016-2018 German Communities

2016

Dresden, NRW
Essen, NRW
Mannheim, BW
Stuttgart, BW
Landkreis Sächsische
Schweiz-Osterzgebirge, SN

2017

Düsseldorf, NRW
Freiburg, BW*
Kreis Düren, NRW
Leipzig, SN*
Münster, NRW

2018

Kreis Bautzen, SN
Hamburg, HH
Frankfurt, HE
Iserlohn, NRW
Landkreis
Teltow-Fläming, BB



**featured in the report*

COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

Nashville 2017

BEST PRACTICE:

Measure Long-term Outcomes of Immigrant & Refugee Integration

In November 2017, a WCTE meeting with Honey Deihimi from the federal integration commissioner's office in Berlin left Louisa Saratora feeling a little envious. The German government seemed to have so much longitudinal data to assess the long-term outcomes of immigrant and refugee integration. Why didn't she have access to that kind of information to help shape advocacy and service provision in Tennessee?

As soon as the Nashville WCTE team returned to the US that winter, Saratora began drafting plans for a longitudinal study to gather information about the situation of locally resettled refugees ten years after their arrival. Had they stayed in the region? What kinds of job opportunities had they been able to access? How had their children and families fared? Today, the WCTE-Nashville team is working to design the questions for such a longitudinal study to ensure a culturally sensitive approach and to create an outreach plan that will reach the target population. They have connected with other members of Welcoming America's network in Colorado, where a similar study has been conducted, as well as local experts at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. They hope to launch the study in 2019.

Nashville Team

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Co-Executive Director
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"Long-term studies of integration are valuable tools to defend the US refugee resettlement program's effectiveness and importance, both for refugees and for receiving communities, and to highlight areas for greater attention, resource generation and collaboration."

*Louisa Saratora, Assistant State Refugee Coordinator,
Tennessee Office of Refugees, Catholic Charities of Tennessee*



Stephan Schmiegitz from Freiburg speaks with Nashville community leaders

BEST PRACTICE:

Pool Resources across Organizations to Better Manage Volunteers

Many WCTE participants remarked on the challenges of sharing best practices for refugee integration between the US and Germany, given the drastically diverging scales of the incoming populations. At the height of its resettlement program, the US accepted nearly 85,000 refugees,



A Nashville resident discusses local welcoming work over dinner with the German WCTE delegates.

a number that has decreased to an expected 21,000 in 2018 under the new administration.^{iv} Meanwhile, Germany saw 890,000 people enter the country to seek asylum in 2015 alone.^v While the number of refugees arriving in Germany in recent years has declined, the scale of the integration challenge remains significantly larger than in the US, both in absolute and relative terms. Given these divergent contexts, US delegates visiting Germany were consistently impressed by the outpouring of volunteer engagement that made the German response possible.

Megan Godbey was particularly amazed that her German counterparts—both in major metropolitan centers like Düsseldorf and Leipzig and in smaller towns like Münster and the County of Düren—had developed such effective systems of volunteer management. The German cities she visited ran successful buddy programs and dozens of volunteer-led initiatives; they also seemed to be developing effective volunteer trainings. Godbey saw an opportunity to similarly scale up volunteer engagement and improve volunteer coordination in Nashville’s adult education programs.

Each of the eight agencies providing adult literacy services in Nashville relies heavily on volunteer instructors, yet none has a volunteer coordinator. When Godbey returned to Nashville, she convened the agencies to assess how they coordinated volunteers. She found that while some had more volunteers than they could

use, others lacked any support. Godbey also surveyed more than 100 volunteers to assess whether they needed more training—and if they would be willing to pay for it. In the summer of 2018, she gave those findings to members of her team and tasked them with making recommendations for a shared data system to better track and share volunteers across agencies. The two-year plan is to hire a volunteer coordinator whose salary would be shared by all participating agencies. While German cities tend to have readier access to municipal and state funding for such positions, the Nashville team’s strategy suggests that collaboration across the non-profit sector can help compensate for less forthcoming government support.

Freiburg 2017

BEST PRACTICE: Develop a Community-Wide Statement of Principles

After its WCTE trip to the US, the Freiburg team returned to Germany impressed and inspired by the [Utah Compact](#) — a statement of five principles that guide Utah’s approach to immigration. The Compact, presented during the team’s visit to Salt Lake County, was developed by community leaders, business associations, law enforcement officers, and members of Utah’s religious community. It represents a simple set of principles rooted in Utah values. In Freiburg, the city council had passed a similar [statement of guiding principles](#) on immigration and integration in 2004. However, unlike in Utah, Freiburg’s political leadership had developed the statement in a closed process.

As part of its WCTE action plan, the Freiburg team submitted a proposal in the fall of 2017 to initiate a series of city-wide dialogues to produce a new statement of principles—one that would include the voices of community groups, faith leaders, immigrant and refugee organizations, local business, and other local actors. The proposal won unanimous support from all parties represented in the city council.

Freiburg’s city government has now committed to an 18-month dialogue process open to a broad range of local organizations and community leaders. The city has also secured local funding for a part-time position to coordinate the dialogue as well as state funding to provide professional



Members of Freiburg's WCTE delegation meet with Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams in Salt Lake City, Utah in April 2017.

facilitation. The community forum will address core questions about what it means for Freiburg to be a welcoming city and what kind of society Freiburg's community members want to build. For Freiburg, this is an unprecedented process of citizen engagement on the issue of welcoming and immigration, representing transformative change at the local level.

CONFRONTING ROADBLOCKS: Understanding Challenges to German Citizenship Campaigns

In the US, naturalization campaigns are a key advocacy and integration strategy, designed to ensure that immigrants eventually enjoy equal rights and opportunities for political participation in their new home. Yet in Germany, where citizenship has historically been passed from parents to children by *ius sanguinis* laws, the struggle to fully include immigrants in the body politic has been slow and halting. Not until the passing of a new immigration law in 2005 did Germany formally recognize that it is a country of immigration (while also emphasizing the need to "control" and "limit" immigration).^{vi} In 2000, a new round of citizenship reforms finally granted citizenship to children born in Germany to long-term resident immigrant parents, though the new laws still required immigrant children to choose between their German and their parents' citizenship upon reaching adulthood. Finally, in 2014, a historic court ruling enabled children born to immigrant parents to retain both their German and foreign citizenship, as long as they could prove that they had grown

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City of Freiburg
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Social Worker (former)
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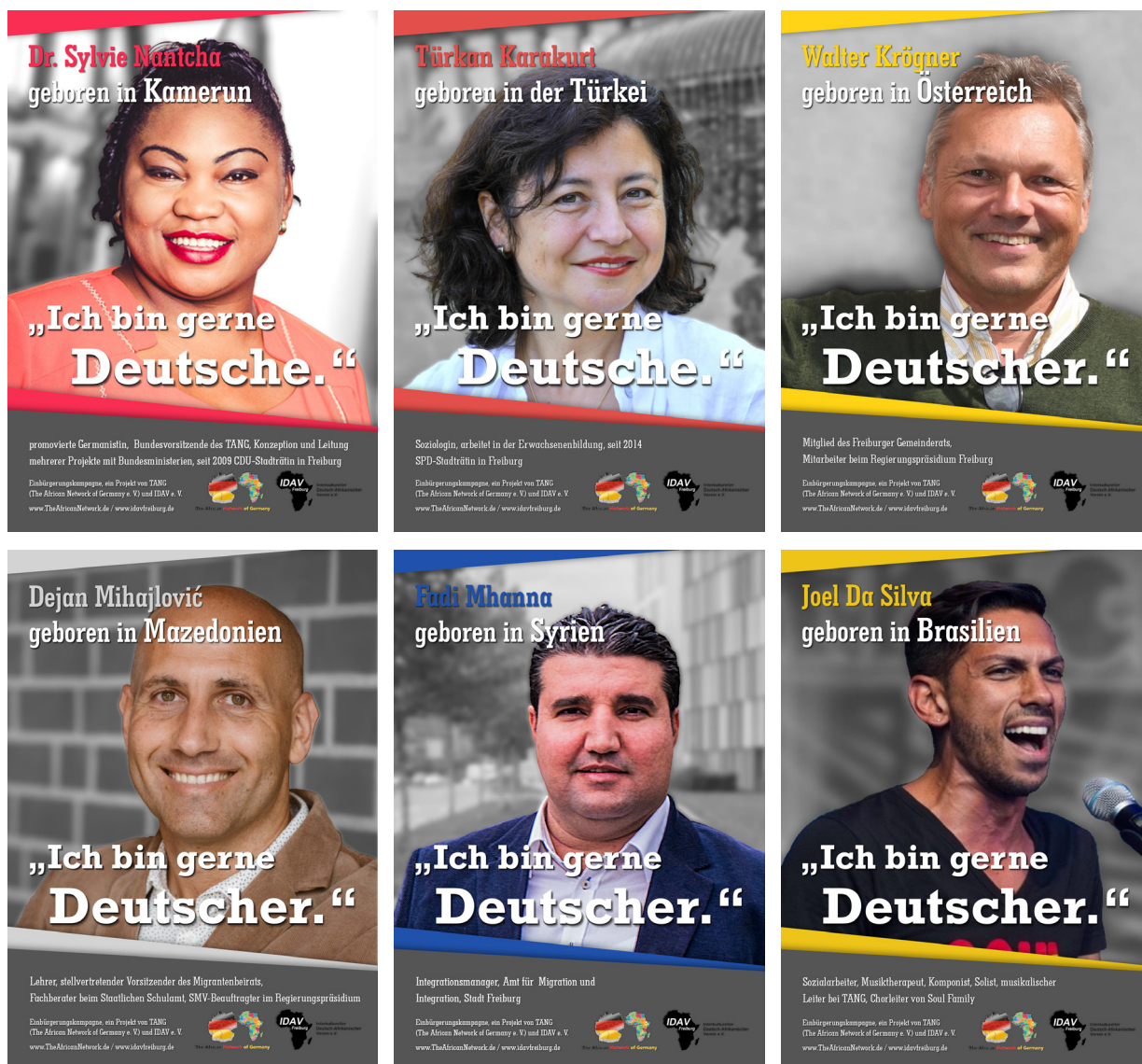
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„Die Menschen, die in die USA kommen, sollen sich mit dem Land identifizieren. In Deutschland hingegen will man nicht, dass die Leute deutsch werden. Und Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund wollen nicht unbedingt deutsch sein.“

People who come to the US are supposed to identify with the country. But in Germany, we don't want people to become German. And people with a migration background don't necessarily want to be German.

*Sylvie Nantcha,
President of the African Network of Germany and City Councilor in Freiburg*

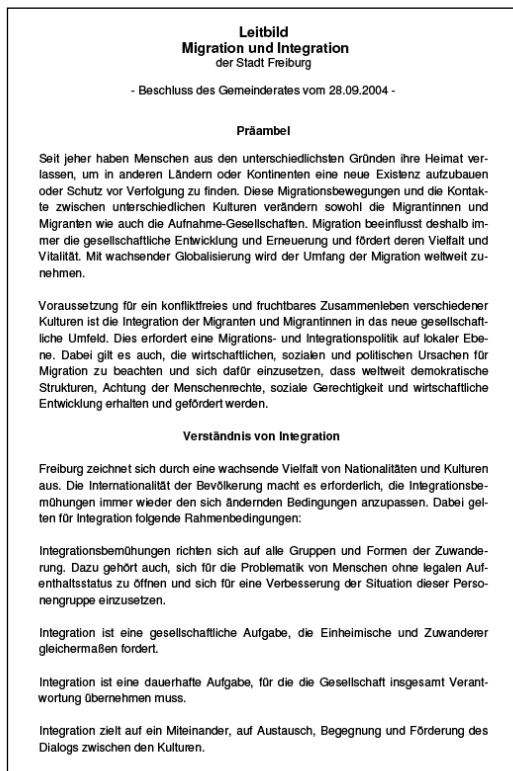


Posters developed for Freiburg's citizenship campaign portray naturalized city residents with the phrase "I like being German."

up primarily in Germany.^{vii} These legal reforms are reflective of broader shifts in the German public. German society is slowly beginning to accept the possibility of complex, multinational identities and the need to extend full citizenship rights to the more than 20 percent of Germans of immigrant background. Nevertheless, unease about access to citizenship remains and is, even now, one of the most significant differences between US and German approaches.

In May 2017, Freiburg's WCTE delegation visited Los Angeles, a city that in 2010 launched a comprehensive naturalization campaign in collaboration with United States Citizenship and Naturalization Services and local libraries to encourage LA residents to become American citizens.^{viii} Freiburg's delegates marveled at the campaign's clear message: American identity is open to newcomers, and the city of LA welcomes its immigrant community to be full and equal Angelenos. They decided to launch a similar campaign in Freiburg.

The Freiburg team created posters showing some of its immigrant members and other local community leaders who are naturalized German citizens. The posters adapted the American notion of "proud to be an American" to "I like being German" (*Ich bin gerne Deutsche(r)*) in an effort to acknowledge German skepticism towards patriotism and national pride, a dominant sentiment



Freiburg's 2004 statement of principles on migration and integration outlines the city's vision for the integration of newcomers and the receiving community.

immigrant background explained that they had no interest in becoming German. Others contended that "liking" German identity was a form of nationalism. EU residents, who already enjoy local voting rights, argued that they had nothing to gain from citizenship. Other members of the committee raised doubts about a project inspired by an American initiative: What lessons about respecting immigrants could Freiburg possibly learn from "Trump's America"?

While yet other committee members suggested that the poster campaign expanded the traditional notion of German identity by featuring German citizens of color, signaling a more inclusive and welcoming concept of national identity, they failed to form a majority in favor of the proposal. Rights-based arguments about the importance of giving immigrants access to voting and public office in their new home were equally unsuccessful. Not only did some members refuse to support the initiative, they reportedly filed a petition with the city council to restrict it from supporting the effort. As a result, a campaign that was initially designed as a broad, city-wide initiative was reduced to a small, NGO-led project with minimal project funding from the city. Not enough, as Sylvie Nantcha noted, to implement the campaign effectively.

The incident is instructive. It highlights both the cultural and historical challenges in translating successful welcoming initiatives from one national context to another, as well as the new challenges of engaging in transatlantic learning under the current US administration. The members of Freiburg's WCTE team highlighted the difficulty of conveying their overwhelmingly positive experience of US city-led welcoming efforts to their German colleagues at a time when German media is dominated by news of Trump administration policies seeking to limit migration and asylum, drastically reduce refugee resettlement, accelerate deportations, and stoke divisive, anti-immigrant sentiments.

in Germany since World War II. Each poster featured statements from naturalized Freiburgers about the civil and political freedoms, career and educational opportunities, democratic values, and many other aspects of German life and identity they enjoy. Türkan Karakurt, a city councilor, and Sylvie Nantcha, also a city councilor as well as head of The African Network of Germany (TANG), presented the campaign to the mayor and city council. They were met with resounding approval. Within a few months, the council began making arrangements to set aside funding for a city-wide citizenship campaign, structured as a partnership between the city and TANG. The campaign was officially presented in June 2018 at the 6th Annual German Diversity Day in Freiburg.

Yet, as Freiburg's WCTE delegates reported, the initiative sparked a controversy when it came before the city council's committee on migration (*Migrationsausschuss*). While the majority of the committee supported the proposal, significant resistance came from some progressive committee members. They reportedly questioned the necessity of a citizenship campaign: Wasn't everyone welcome in Freiburg, regardless of their nationality?

Some argued that the campaign was exclusionist and even racist as it might imply that being German was better than any another nationality. Some members of

Salt Lake County 2017

BEST PRACTICE: Build a Cross-sector Welcoming Team

The relationships that emerge from ten intensive days of travel and shared learning are among the most valuable outcomes of WCTE. Salt Lake City's team lead Zee Xiao and

Natalie El-Deiry had worked together years ago at the International Rescue Center (IRC). Xiao also knew Deputy Mayor Karen Hale and she first met Jason Mathis, executive vice president of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, in 2016 when Salt Lake County and the Chamber collaborated to launch Welcoming Salt Lake, a joint initiative "to support New Americans—refugees and immigrants—by welcoming them into our community."^{ix} But it was not until Xiao needed to pull together a team of leading local integration practitioners for the WCTE application that all four team members came together and began thinking about ways to collaborate across their sectors. The team still meets regularly and continues its active collaboration between the city and county government, refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant and refugee organizations, and the private sector. They also make efforts to manage inevitable professional transitions. Following Jason Mathis' move to Florida, the team briefed his successor about their experiences during the Welcoming Communities trip and is working to continue their strong cross-sector partnership.

BEST PRACTICE: Pursue Full Inclusion with Citizenship Campaigns

The SLC team returned from Germany inspired by the citizenship campaign that was being developed in Freiburg. Freiburg's WCTE team had mentioned that their campaign was modeled on the citizenship



SLC team members visit WCTE colleagues in LA to discuss citizenship initiatives

efforts of Los Angeles, so Xiao and El-Deiry arranged to fly to LA to see first-hand what made the city's citizenship campaign successful. They connected with team members from LA's WCTE team, who set up two days of meetings with local community partners. LA's initiative was established as a partnership with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It encourages eligible immigrant residents to apply for citizenship by supporting provider services and establishing "citizenship corners" in libraries and other community spaces.

Back in Salt Lake County, Xiao and Mathis went before their state legislature, representing both the county government and the private sector, to make a strong case for state funding

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to encourage naturalization. The legislature granted them a one-time appropriation of \$100,000. Now, the SLC team is working on the next step: persuading the four county administrations and local philanthropy to match the state funding. The aim is to establish a long-term funding pool that providers in all four counties can access to improve and expand citizenship and naturalization services.

A key argument of the United for Citizenship campaign is that naturalization not only supports social integration, it also increases an individual's earnings and thus state and local tax revenue. To this end, a portion of the state funding is dedicated to measuring the economic, social, and political benefits of naturalization. The rest is earmarked to support the creation of an evidence-based naturalization program, not only in resource-rich Salt Lake County, but also in three less-resourced Utah counties: Davis, Utah, and Weber. The initiative will reach a total of more than 2 million Utah residents.

To reach Utah residents eligible for naturalization, the SLC team also adapted Freiburg's poster campaign. Posters of five new Americans who have been selected as Citizenship Ambassadors will appear all across the four participating counties to encourage Utah residents to naturalize and to

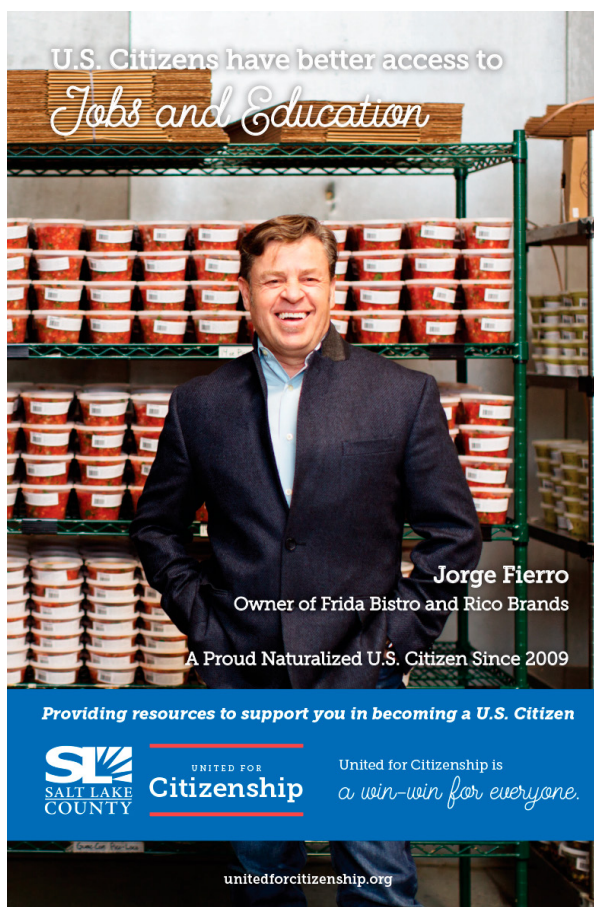
communicate the benefits of citizenship.

United for Citizenship launched at the Utah State Capitol on August 23, 2018. It had the support of county mayor Ben McAdams and a broad coalition of state senators as well as religious and civil society leaders. The campaign received major media coverage across the county and the state.

BEST PRACTICE:

Give Migration a Human Face with a New American Portraits Series

The SLC team is working with major art venues across Salt Lake City, such as the symphony, local theaters, and museums, to feature portraits of New Americans who have made their home in the city. Also inspired by Freiburg's poster campaign, the goal of the New American Portraits is to remind residents of the real people affected by the divisive political rhetoric on migration, to make them aware that community members they know and care about are also immigrants, and to counter the dehumanizing rhetoric that is increasingly dominant in the United States. The team is currently interviewing New Americans who will participate in the exhibit. The project will launch in April 2019.



Posters for Salt Lake County's United for Citizenship Campaign portray community leaders who have acquired US citizenship and explain their motivations to naturalize.

BEST PRACTICE: Offer Tax Incentives for Employer-Sponsored Language Classes

One of the most innovative projects to emerge from the WCTE is Salt Lake City's effort to offer ESL tax incentives for employers. The SLC team returned from their WCTE trip astounded by the vastly divergent approaches to integration in Germany and the US: While Germany requires refugees to take extensive language courses before entering the job market, the US requires refugees to find employment and become self-sufficient within a few months of arrival, regardless of language proficiency. For

refugees in Germany, the focus on language can be frustrating, especially for adults who are eager to support themselves and who seek the dignity of a paying job. For refugees in the US, however, the precipitated entry into the job market at the expense of acquiring language skills often leaves them stuck in low-paying jobs for decades.

The SLC team hopes to find a middle ground between the two systems. After returning from Germany, Mathis, acting on behalf of Salt Lake County's chamber of commerce, had conversations with ESL providers and legislators about the possibility of a tax incentive for employers. Several legislators expressed their interest, and so the SLC team reached out to the National Skills Coalition to conduct an initial assessment, both to determine the return on investment for employers who offer ESL classes to employees and to establish quality guidelines for ESL providers. Their findings will be presented to legislators. The aim is to establish a \$200,000 fund for employer ESL tax incentives.

Leipzig 2017

BEST PRACTICE: Support the Political Participation of Immigrants and Refugees

New Americans—this concept stuck with Alexander Melzer as he traveled back to Leipzig in the spring of 2017. One of the biggest differences he and his colleagues had noticed in the US was the emphasis on political participation in the US, championed both by integration experts and by the immigrant and refugee communities themselves. Newly arrived immigrants and refugees to the US quickly understood themselves to be new *Americans*, entitled to equal rights of participation in the democratic political system of their new home country. From the citizenship corners in LA's public libraries to the political organizing and advocacy work of immigrant communities in Detroit, the US offers an active infrastructure to support the political participation of newcomers.

When Melzer returned to Leipzig, he shared his impressions with colleagues at Pandechaion, a non-profit group that provides social services to refugees in more than a dozen city shelters. As a result, the Pandechaion team began to actively support immigrant organizations in the neighborhoods where it operates. Pandechaion staff worked with Syrian refugees in one of Leipzig's more difficult neighborhoods to establish an independent immigrant organization able to advocate for the residents' needs. They hope that supporting the creation of such immigrant and refugee-led organizations will empower the city's new residents to view their neighborhoods in Leipzig as home, a place where they have agency to shape their daily lives.

Leipzig Team

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Alexander Melzer
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Roman Schulz
Press and Communications Officer
Education Agency of Saxony

Christopher Zenker
City Councilor
City Council of Leipzig
Founder
Sachspendenzentrale
(Donation Center) Leipzig

BEST PRACTICE: Offer Specialized Services for LGBTQ Refugees

The 2017 WCTE visit to Detroit included a visit to Freedom House, a shelter that specializes in services for LGBTQ asylum seekers. WCTE participants heard stories from a local social worker describing the unique challenges and safety concerns faced by LGBTQ residents at Freedom House and the importance of having a safe place to live with access to social, psychological, and legal support during the asylum process.

For Martina Kador Probst, head of Leipzig's social services department, the hour-long discussion in the basement of the shelter made her reflect on the lack of specific LGBTQ services offered by her department. She acted quickly to remedy the issue: Upon returning to Leipzig, she modified an existing proposal for an anti-violence coordinator and created a new position for a social worker dedicated specifically to LGBTQ refugees. While Leipzig does not provide separate LGBTQ housing, the new social worker now travels between the city's shelters to ensure that information and access to services for LGBTQ residents is widely publicized.

BEST PRACTICE: Improve Communication & Build Relationships Across Sectors

A key component of Welcoming America's strategy for creating welcoming communities is strengthening cross-sector networks. On their first day in the US, German participants of the WCTE completed a mapping exercise designed to identify the relevant community actors for integration work, existing partnerships, and sectors where more intentional network-building is needed.

The Leipzig team took this lesson to heart. The city of Leipzig was already hosting regular meetings of refugee-serving social workers as well as meetings of the IQ Network Saxony, which assists immigrants and refugees with their integration in the local labor market. Following the Leipzig team's visit to the US, the WCTE team communicated the importance of supporting and strengthening these types of network meetings to the mayor and their local partners. Since then, Mayor Burkhard Jung has participated in meetings of the IQ Network Saxony and has decided to elevate its status by putting the Network's meetings directly under the supervision of the mayor's office.

The focus on engaging all relevant community actors has also informed the team's approach to a new community center, the *Haus der Begegnungen*, or House of Encounters. The newly renovated center was completed in May 2018 and is located next to a refugee shelter. Rather than functioning as a one-stop shop for service provision, as originally intended, the new building is now envisioned as a more participatory entity—a place where residents and newcomers can come together to meet and engage with each other. It will also house networking meetings of local community partners.

CONFRONTING ROADBLOCKS: Understanding Challenges to Sustainable Engagement

For the Leipzig team, their WCTE Action Plan provided an important roadmap for the year immediately following their US visit. But once the goals were achieved, the plan outgrew its usefulness. And while the Leipzig team agreed that the WCTE had helped build relationships across different sectors of the city, they also noted that maintaining close cooperation in the long term has been challenging. The demands of daily life and each team member's professional responsibilities quickly take precedence. Cross-sector, WCTE responsibilities are not written into their daily job responsibilities.

Many WCTE teams pointed out the challenges of sustaining collaboration after the program's end, but German teams found it particularly difficult. In the US, Welcoming America offers WCTE participants an infrastructure of support: Many of them meet each year at the Welcoming Interactive and stay connected through the network's support services and events. For the German teams, the lack of a national network to provide an infrastructure for collaboration and ongoing learning makes a sustained engagement with the WCTE model difficult.

CONCLUSION: AN ENDURING COMMITMENT TO WELCOMING

This brief collection of case studies provides some insight into the wealth of learning and the direct, local impact of the Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange. During the three years of its implementation from 2016 to 2018, the WCTE provided an opportunity to more than 120 local integration practitioners from all areas of city government and administration, civil society, business, and faith organizations to view their local challenges in an international context. What seemed natural at home in the US or in Germany was often a positive revelation or an unpleasant shock for visitors from the other side of the Atlantic.

Across all three years, local integration practitioners developed new sensibilities. Many German participants went home with a new perspective on the value of political participation as a core component of integration and a new appreciation for immigrant and refugee-led organizations as equal members of the receiving community. Many American participants recognized the value of more upfront comprehensive integration services and found new ways to push for state and local funding.

Between 2016 and 2018, public debate and political leaders' rhetoric on the issue of immigration and refugees shifted dramatically on both sides of the Atlantic. Since 2016, the new US administration has drastically curtailed the US refugee resettlement program and the travel ban put a halt to any form of migration from a number of refugee-sending countries. The US federal government has abandoned integration as a policy goal and instead shifted its focus to assimilation and blocking new arrivals. In Germany, the initial outpouring of welcome in 2015 has likewise deteriorated into a narrow focus on border protection and the shutting down of migratory routes to Europe.

With immigrant and refugee communities are assault, local integration practitioners operate in a highly hostile environment, often isolated from or working in direct opposition to the national level. In this context, the WCTE program became more than a simple learning exchange. For many participants on both sides of the Atlantic, the program offered a crucial reaffirmation of the broad-based, international community of people in cities across the US and Germany who continue to work diligently on behalf of open, inclusive, and welcoming societies.

ENDNOTES

- i UNHCR, "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015," *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, June 20, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>.
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