

Office of Employment Promotion, Statistics and Integration
WIR-Program Coordinator

Offenbach
am Main

OF



Coming home
TO OFFENBACH

Everyday integration
13 Club Portraits

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FOREWORD OF CITY COUNCILOR PETER FREIER



City Councilor Peter Freier,
*Head of Legal, Employment
Promotion and Integration*

Dear Readers,

Offenbach received a lot of national and international attention in 2016. The city was nominated as the German contribution to the International Architecture Biennial in Venice and awarded the prize exemplary “Arrival City” in Germany. Our then Federal President Joachim Gauck visited Offenbach at the end of November 2016 and paid tribute to the city’s diverse services for assisting immigrants with integrating them in our shared city.

By the end of 2016, 159 nationalities called Offenbach “home.” As one of the most international and diverse cities in Germany and Europe, very different cultures coexist peacefully and without significant conflict. We are proud of this in Offenbach.

Despite our appreciation of this atten-

tion for our city, we understand from many years of experience that integration does not occur automatically but happens with numerous difficulties and challenges. Although economic conditions are good, the city still shows high unemployment and a high rate of people accessing social services. We understand that this is intrinsically connected to immigration. At least according to the statistical trend, immigrants have a significantly higher risk of unemployment and poverty than the population at large. On the other hand, while many regions in Germany are aging, Offenbach is a comparatively young and growing city. This also is a product of immigration. That is, this high degree of immigration may be an important factor to making Offenbach “future-proof.”

Great challenges therefore occur side-by-side with great possibilities for the

future. Our task as Offenbach’s city administration, municipal politicians and an urban society is to master and transform these challenges into real advantages for our city and the future. For this, we need education, investment and jobs which contribute to securing and developing Offenbach as a cosmopolitan and diverse yet unified community and city.

In fostering and building a community of citizens, the diverse associations and immigrant groups plays an increasingly important role in Offenbach. They offer their members community and the familiar trust of their native homelands. More and more migrant organizations are picking up the baton and responsibility of advancing intercultural living together. They enrich what sociologists call our “civil society” and provide the vital lifeblood of a free and democratic society.

That the world is one and at home in Offenbach is shown by the world map and the markings of its resident's countries of origin.



Migrant organizations may also provide the bridge between immigrants and the German society at large. Both are thus part of an effective integration program. Federal President Gauck formulated this well in his speech in Offenbach: "Many members of these associations are at home in two or even more cultures. Because of this multi-cultural perception of self, they have the opportunity to act as bridge builders, sensitizing the majority native society to minorities, and vice versa bringing immigrants who are still on the periphery into the society at large."

We have therefore undertaken as a city to deepen our dialogue with migrant organizations. The dialogue platform between city administration and migrant organizations, the "Integration Experts", started ten years with this as its mandate. This team has taken on

diverse problems from health care to schools and education to questions regarding housing in the neighborhoods and issues surrounding the labor market. We have done this with the intention of addressing all critical areas.

We are trying to strengthen migrant organizations with albeit small funding programs. And so far it is working very well. In the name of the city magistrate, I would like to personally thank all of you who have contributed to our community in the associations and municipalities, and also in the city administration and its social agencies and patrons.

This brochure "Coming home to Offenbach" is intended to be a small thank you to our co-operation partners and all active parties and persons. It is already the second publication of its kind

and many stories from the first edition in 2013 find their continuation here and are of course provide wholly new inspiration.

What I find most exciting is that – in addition to the many historic migrant organizations in our city – new associations are being established all the time. The first even dates back to 1699. The makers of the brochure have given a great deal though and effort to presenting everything in a well-structured and comprehensible manner, even with respect to our rich, shared history. I wish you all joy in reading about the multi-cultural Offenbach we call "home."

Yours truly,

Peter Freier



Ana-Violeta Sacaliuc
WIR-Program Coordinator

Creativity and responsibility

The cultural diversity of the city of Offenbach is also reflected in the self-initiative and organization of its migrant population. The sheer number of educational, parental, cultural and sport associations linked to their member's national, ethnic or religious origin in Offenbach is simply too great to allow its magnitude to be fully reflected in just one publication.

This issue of our series of publications aims at providing insights into some migrant organizations. These have either contributed our city's history due to their longevity or been newly established in recent time. Through their activities and enthusiasm they have developed into true places of interculturalism and been exemplary supporters of the latest developments in

our society. What all 13 organizations portrayed here have in common is their commitment to our community through exemplary integration work in the City of Offenbach.

For this brochure, associations and congregations from ten countries from three continents have opened their doors to present portraits of themselves in image and word. The three largest foreign groups in Offenbach from Turkey, Greece and Romania are represented here by two very different associations each. Polish immigrants make up the next largest group and are portrayed in two organizations as well: A religious congregation and a cultural association; however, both in one chapter, as they have grown together historically. These examples alone testify to the great diversity of immigrants found amongst the land-

scape of Offenbach associations.

The city wishes to be a partner and foster a supporting environment for the development of the associations by providing consulting services, promoting small projects and assisting in networking amongst integration-minded actors in the public sector and between the clubs themselves. With this, we hope to ensure a win-win situation for everyone:

- The city gains new access to its immigrant populations.
- The associations receive material and advisory resources for their integration work and are thereby strengthened as organizations.
- Political participation and civic engagement allows one to identify Offenbach am Main as home and oneself as an Offenbacher, regardless of one's origin..

SUMMARY::

Founded 1699
 Ca. 220 members
 Evangelical Congregation
 Church (built in 1717)
 With parsonage (built ca. 1700)

CONTACT PERSON:

Pastor Ludwig Schneider-Trotier
 President Rainer Maus

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 D-63065 Offenbach
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French-Reformed Congregation

Fleeing France due to their religious beliefs, about 38,000 Huguenots came to Germany at the end of the 17th century with many settling in Offenbach.

Protestants founded the French Reformed Church in as early as 1699. In 1717, they initially built a very simple church, whose façade was adorned in 1874/75 with its beautiful gable to be seen on corner of Herrnstrasse & Berliner Strasse.

The members of these initial Offenbach migrant organizations quickly integrated themselves into our city. As producers and craftsmen, they contributed to the prosperity of Offenbach and its development as a leather and industrial center. Just as before, the name André is still heard across the city. And even Goethe's fiancée Lili Schönemann from the family D'Orville was a member of the French-Reformed Congregation.



Gold and diamond confirmands were invited to the Church's Jubilee Confirmation; they were fourteen years old in 1956 and 1966, respectively. Regular worship services are held in simple language for people with disabilities, and worship services are also held in French.



1699

Establishment of the French Reformed Church in Offenbach am Main. Count Johann Philipp gave numerous privileges to encourage the settlement of Huguenots.

1703

The arrival of further craft-trained Huguenots. Two communities were formed: The old community of the long-established Offenbachers and a new community of Huguenots. This division continued until 1824.



Pastor Schneider-Trotier before the paintings of the couple Pierre and Marie Françoise Romagnac. They bequeathed their house to the Offenbach French Reformed Church, which has functioned as the parsonage since 1782.

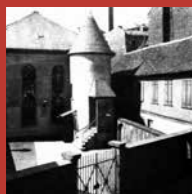
Active hospitality and ecumenism

The openness with which the Huguenots were received in Offenbach is still reflected in the activities of its congregation today. For over 30 years (1976 to 2010), the French Reformed congregation hosted the Romanian Orthodox Church on its Herrnstrasse premises. As soon as the Protestant worship service was finished on Sunday morning, the Orthodox services began after icons and candlesticks had been quickly set out over the noon hour.

Many events in the church and in the town hall were held jointly. “Even today, members of the Orthodox congregation participate in our summer gatherings and at the winter charity action “Food and Warmth,” explains Pastor Ludwig Schneider-Trotier.

The Ecumenical Project “Food and Warmth” was initiated by the French Reformed Church, when during the winter of 1992/93 far more people rang at the parish church for food than had ever

before. Thereupon, the congregation invited the community to exchange experiences about homelessness in Offenbach, and the idea of a midday meal to be held at changing places throughout Offenbach arose. “Food and warmth” have been around for almost a quarter of a century. Initially, three congregations participated, and now in 2016 the number has risen to 15 with Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat being the first Muslim congregation to participate.



1707

Establishment of the Jewish Congregation in Offenbach, who were granted less freedom of movement than the Huguenots. Building of the 2nd Offenbach Synagogue in the Großen Judengasse in 1729/30, today the Große Marktstraße, after the first synagogue burned down in 1720.



1717

First worship service in the Offenbach French Reformed Church.

Interreligious meeting place

“Talking about the Bible” is another ecumenical project of the French-Reformed Congregation. Pastor Ludwig Schneider-Trotier and his colleague Kurt Sohn from the Catholic Congregation of St. Paul talk about the Bible that lies between and binds them. Other regular events are French courses, the choir rehearsals of “Le Petit Choeur” and meetings of the cultural association of the Women of Cameroon. “We are

characterized by internationality and the multi-nationality of our members, guests and partner communities in France and Italy,” says Pfarrer Schneider-Trotier.

The church building itself often hosts interreligious events, as due to its simplicity, that is, no decorations, paintings, candles or crucifix, representatives of all faiths can feel comfortable and at peace there. The coat of arms hangs

in the vestibule of the parish, and its depiction of the ship containing Jesus’ disciples surrounded by waves harkens to the suffering of the refugees of that time, a motif that is still very present today. Pfarrer Schneider-Trotier urges all who will listen, “As a refugee congregation, we are always aware that we are all guests on this earth.”



SUMMARY:

Founded 1974
 In Offenbach
 Ca. 900 members
 Muslim congregation
 Mosque and
 Congregation rooms

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Ahthesham Raja
 Muhammad Yaqoob

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Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Offenbach

Many believers of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat congregation came to Germany as asylum seekers after the Ahmadiyya were declared a non-Islamic minority by the Pakistani parliament in 1974 and then discriminated against and persecuted. The adherents themselves stand for the original values of Islam, which include mercy toward all people, justice, separation of religion and state, and the end of violent actions in the name of religion.

Built in 2006, the Baitul-Jame Mosque on Boschstrasse is one of the largest Muslim places of worship of the over 45 mosques in Germany. Further congregation rooms for the approx. 900 believers in Offenbach are located on the Ludwigstrasse.

The Congregations is involved with many activities throughout the city. In 2013, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat became the first Muslim organization in Germany to be given the status of “corporation organized under public law”.



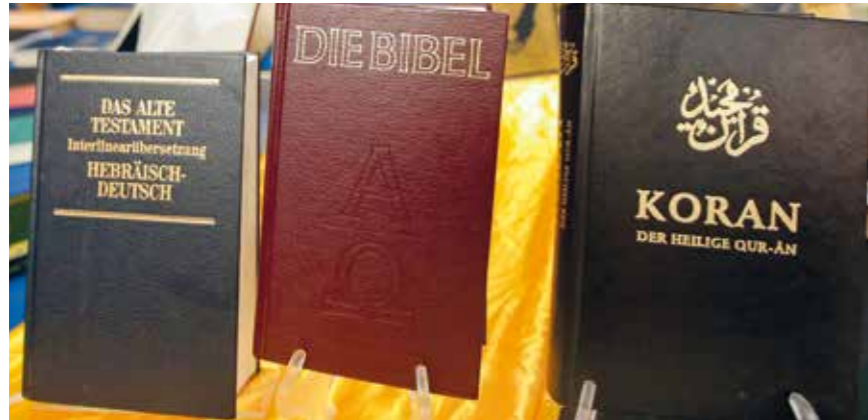
Seniors home residents look forward with joy to the visit of women and children from Ahmadiyya.

**1890**

Slovenian and Italian workers are employed in the city during the construction of the Main levee.

Around 1900

The move of Sinti people to Offenbach in search of industrial work; integration goes well. Settlement of Jews from Poland and Russia that in 1905 made up ca. 36% of the Jewish population in Offenbach.



Integration is openness to others

Congregation guests are greeted right at the gate of the Baitul – Jame Mosque and guided into the building. In a small room, drinks and snacks are prepared, and Wardah Khawaja, Safora Raja and Tahiera Ahmed are already waiting. They are the representatives of the six women groups in Offenbach. District groups have formed to represent the individual areas of Offenbach which are led by respective female or male presidents of the various men's and wom-

en's organizations. In the mosque men are separated from women, and thus women have their own rooms to meet. During public events, such as Open Mosque Day, women also spend time in the large prayer room.

"Amongst themselves, women are freer and have the opportunity to act more openly," says Safora Raja. As self-evident as wearing a headscarf in the mosque and at congregation events is, she does

In the discussion forum "Talking about Religion", the congregation invites participants to participate in a lively interreligious exchange

not wear one in the school where she works as a teacher. "We adhere to the rules, also those in secular society. This also includes the courtesy of shaking the hand of someone of the opposite sex, although this is not the norm in our culture."

Each group – women and men – meets once a month to exchange ideas on religious and secular life. "We speak mostly in German, and the Friday sermons in the mosque are also held in Urdu,"

Give something back to the nation

says Wardah Khawaja, who has only been living in Germany for six years, yet speaks German almost accent-free.

Muhammad Yaqoob, the spokesman for the congregation, explains that believers hold it as self-evident to engage in the country in which they live. In the group meetings various community actions are planned." We want to return what we ourselves have received," says Muham-

mad Yaqoob. For example, young men and young people of the congregation clean selected streets and paths on New Year's morning, women and children visit senior citizens residencies, the youth group organizes blood donations, and charity runs are organized, to mention just a few. The congregation offers New Year and blessing ceremony meals and receptions, participates in Open Mosque Day every year on 3 October,

now participates in inter-religious homeless meal program, "Food and Warmth" as of 2016/17 and invites school classes and groups to the mosque. The members are involved in the Foreigner Advisory Council and interreligious dialogues and discussion groups. "The diverse contacts to the neighbors, the city, the churches and organizations are important to us as Muslims and our congregations," says Muhammad Yaqoob.



1912

Italian workers begin elevating the railway line in Offenbach.

1916

French prisoners of war are deployed in agriculture.

SUMMARY:

Founded 1975
 Ca. 1200 members in the
 Rhine-Main area
 Orthodox congregation
 Church and diaconal center

CONTACT PERSON:

Pastor Stefan Anghel
 Ionut Plenz

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Romanian Orthodox Church Community

It took until 2014, that is, two complete years to complete the complex painting in the Romanian Orthodox Church. In the meantime, the premises on the Backstrasse have become almost too small for the average 200 worshipers at the evening services on weekends. From 1975 to 1997, the services were held in the chapel of the Isenburg Castle and then in the French-reformed church until 2007.

The close connection between the congregations and both former pastors, Tudor and Krämer, is also found in the fact that events took place in the congregation hall on Herrnstraße, and the Orthodox faithful still actively support the “Food and Warmth” charity campaign in the winter.

The search for suitable church and communal spaces took several years, as did the necessary rebuilding measures. In addition to the church, group rooms and emergency shelters for the needy are available. In the meantime, another site has been purchased for the diaconal center which is currently under construction.



The Romanian-Orthodox Church Community received, together with the Romanian Community in the Rhine-Main Region (CROM), the Integration Award of the City of Offenbach in 2015. 2015 also marked its 40-year anniversary which was celebrated with a great feast.

1935

The Nuremberg race law creates the legal basis for the persecution of the Jews in Germany. By 1945, ca. six million Jews had lost their lives through national socialist terror in Europe.



1945

Foreign forced laborers are brought back to their homeland from the Allied collection camps. The first Jewish community in Hesse is re-founded in Offenbach, and the synagogue dedicated in 1956.



Icon painters from Romania painted the ceiling and walls with biblical scenes for two years. Nothing remains inside the church to remind you that the building was originally the work-shop of a roofing company.

Commitment to the people

The ever-increasing numbers of baptized persons shows that the community is growing. It was four in 1975, and then ten in 1995, and ca. 170 persons were baptized in 2016. “Before all the statisticians do, this is how we are experience demographic change”, laughed Pastor Anghel. As the number of baptized children has increased, so too has the number participants in the Romanian school. In the meantime, 26 children arrive in the community every

two weeks on Saturdays, ten more at irregular times. “When we give primary schoolchildren instruction in literature, history, geography and Romanian, we call it integration with roots.” Moreover, they sing and dance and play football or table tennis, and holidays are spent outdoors.

The priest is convinced that religion creates identity and that one’s own culture is like a protective cloak away

from home. “The fear of losing one’s own culture prevents integration”. The Congregation supports adult immigrants with two projects: Low entrance requirement German courses for Romanian migrant workers and sponsorships for integration. Congregation members help thereby with translations, administrative procedures, filling out forms or simply lend an ear to listen to other’s problems. The community has three representatives of the

Integration with roots

Romanian associations in the Offenbach Foreign Advisory Council. Pastor Anghel announces with pleasure, “Together we have arranged it for our congregation rooms to become an official polling place for the parliamentary elections in Romania in December 2016,” says. Ionut Plenz is the Director of the Orthodox Diaconal which was Founded 2015 to meet the growing needs for social work. “This includes nursing services and networking with the city’s migration advisory services. A constant exchange is necessary to avoid duplicity in the migration work.” The tense situation on the free housing market is a major obstacle for integration for many immigrants. “Without a residence, one cannot get a bank account and without a bank account one cannot receive a salary,” explains Plenz. “When it becomes clear however that the immigrants cannot manage

life in Germany, we also support them in returning home.”

“Someone is integrated when he has found a home where he or she now lives,” says Pastor Anghel. The Congregation has created a great deal in promoting integration with the support of the city. A large donation or grant to expand the main office, in order to cope with the growing tasks of the

Congregation and Diakonie would be terrific. Since 2012, the Romanian Orthodox Church Community has been recognized by the State of Hesse as a corporation organized of public law. As such, it stands ready to devote itself with even more effort to education and development, for example, in the form of Christian-Orthodox religious lessons.



1949

The German Constitution or Basic Law comes into force, including Article 16, the Right to Asylum.



1954

Offenbach becomes a large city; it’s 100,000th new citizen is the baby of a resident displaced from her native land (Strong influx of displaced persons from East and West Prussia, the Sudetenland and Silesia since 1945).

SUMMARY:

Founded 1977
 Ca. 200 members
 Cultural association
 Association rooms for teaching,
 training and gathering together

CONTACT PERSON:

Slavka Branka Surkic

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Serbian Cultural Association

Culture, sport and education are the pillars of the Serbian Cultural Association, which has had its registered office on Strahlenberger Strasse for over 20 years. It has had different names in the past, but the basic impulse has remained the same since 1977: Bring children in off the streets and people together. Other goals include preserving traditions through song and dance, expanding contacts with other clubs and the city of Offenbach, and teaching children Serbian and Cyrillic characters. The main driving force is folklore dance. It has kept some members in the club over several generations. Many couples have met through dancing, so it is also natural for their children to attend dance courses as well. The numerous trophies in the large hall reflect the success of the efforts, as in 2014 the ten to 16-year-olds danced there way to a gold medal. The Association is also proud of receiving the Njegoš Order for its work in preserving and cultivating Serbian culture, which was awarded them by the Serbian Republic in 2004.



Women's power on the Executive board: Slavka Branka Surkic (in the middle) surrounded by committed companions.

**1955**

Start of the bilateral agreements on labor recruitment between Germany and various states: Italy (1955), Spain, Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), Yugoslavia (1968).

1956

Offenbach is the first German city to receive the Europa Award from the Council of Europe for its efforts to bring about European unity.



Robert Jovanovski is one of the pillars of the Serbian Cultural Association. For many years, he was its Chairman, and now he focus is on dance groups. He trains the younger children in particular, but keeps a watchful eye on the other groups as well.

Dance is the focus

There is a lot of noise and commotion on the association premises. Parents bring their children, get drinks, settle down in the big hall and talk with one another. The children aged between 10 and 15 wait impatiently until the youngest group – between four and ten years old – are finished with their dance lessons. Yet the latter cannot be bothered with the hustle and bustle outside at the door to the training room, as they are still concentrated on

instructor Robert Jovanovski's caring instructions on the next dance steps. Sladjana (31) looks to her seven-year-old daughter, who has been dancing for just two years. She has danced with all her heart since the age of ten – "dance is a life philosophy." Biljana (38) also grew up in the association. Her daughters saw photos of their mother dancing in traditional costumes which became the driving force for them to

dance themselves and wear such beautiful costumes. For Biljana, it is self-evident that their children take part in Cyrillic lessons. The eleven-year-old Amelie enjoys meeting her friends at the dance. She has been dancing since she was in the cradle, as her parents meet each other within the club.

The youngest trainer of the club, Kristina Visnjic, age 17, checks whether the costumes for the next performance are



1957

Establishment Treaty of the European Economic Community: Free movement within the Union.



1964

The inflow of immigrants in unbroken and on the September 10, 1964 the millionth guest worker arrives in Cologne.

The Balkans in our hearts

ready and in order. A room in the association is packed with traditional clothing from different parts of the country, as the four dance groups must be dressed appropriately. "It is especially important during championships that our dancers be dressed in costumes that come from the regions from which the Folklore dances themselves originate," says Robert Jovanovski.

Slavka Branka Surkic looks with pride at the many people. "In the meantime, we have become a very international association. Most of us have German passport and our club is made up of many mixed culture individuals and relationships." The association cultivates its connection to the 50 Serbian clubs in Germany and other migrant organizations in the City. The Bulgarian and the Greek congregations were invited

to participate in the Annual Concert in December 2016 where they will present various different dance and song performances under the motto "Balkans in our Heart."



SUMMARY:

Founded 1977
 389 members
 Association rooms in Speyerstrasse
 Object: To maintain closeness with Greece

CONTACT PERSON:

Tamaroglou Damianos
 Nikoleta Kotina

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 D-63067 Offenbach
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Greek community in Offenbach and surroundings

The Greeks are one of the Migrants groups who have lived longest in Offenbach; many are now in their second and third generation in the city. They have been active in the Offenbach committees for many years, such as the City Youth Council or Foreign Advisory Council. The Celebration of Associations and the cultural Festival of Nations cannot be even imagined without their food and dance. In 2017, its 40th birthday will be celebrated, even though the association has only been officially registered since 1986.

On Fridays and Saturdays the members meet in the club rooms in the Speyerstraße. The afternoons are full of dance training. Afterwards, the tables are placed in the large communal room for meals together or simply to sit and talk. “We always have time for a coffee” is a Greek motto that is far too seldom practiced in everyday life, particularly by the Greeks that grew up in Germany. In the association however, members drink their coffee in peace and calm.



The younger generation makes up the Executive Board: Spiros Soulakis, Aristeia Plumi, Tamaroglou Damianos and Nikoleta Kotina (from left).

**1970**

According to Offenbach-Post the City of Offenbach may rightly call itself an international city as every 10th inhabitant or resident comes from abroad.

1971

Establishment of the “Representative Assembly of Qualified Foreign Workers” on initiative the pastors of the Protestant Castle Church Congregation and the sponsorship of the German Trade Union (DGB)¹.



Like a big family

The “Zeibekiko” is being danced: Around 20 young people are grouped around a dancer who is completely enthralled in the music. They clap and encourage him on until he gives the honor to the next person to take his place. “At weddings at times, even plates fly, but we are also satisfied if it’s just napkins and flowers,” laughs the dance instructor Georgios Skarlatos. He recounts with Chryssoula Tzima the dance training of the four children dance groups

from ages four up to young adults. In December 2016, after a long hiatus, a joint dance lesson took place with the Serbian Cultural Center. “60 children practiced together Serbian and Greek dances, and found they have a lot in common,” retells the dance instructor with pride.

While the adults sit together in the large room, the children and young people in the group room play and talk. During

In 2010, the Greek community received the Integration Award of the City of Offenbach.

the week, native language classes for 120 children from the first grade take place. Vasili Katsikas teaches two of the ten groups daily, although the language of the young Greeks is mostly German.

“It’s normal to feel at home where you see people similar to you. We are like a big family here; no one should be alone,” says Nikoleta Kotina, Deputy Chairman of the Association. Nothing

Always time for a coffee

is missing in Offenbach with its many Greek shops, doctors and craftsmen ... “well, perhaps the sea and sun,” she jokes.

As the community grows, its newcomers are always well received. The members are there to advise and act for others as necessary: They answer general questions, help with filling forms, assist in visiting agencies, schools or the

doctor’s office, to mention a few. But it is important that both sides – the Offenbachers, irrespective of their origin, and the newbies – be patient with one another. One must spend a good deal of time in country, before one is able to understand it. And Ms. Kotina is convinced that “In order for integration to actually work, everyone must be open.” For that reason, the seven-person Executive Board maintains good

contacts with other associations and organizations and the city apparatus itself.

Twelve-year-old Janni participates in practically every activity the club provides and is a big fan of FC Asteras, the Greek futsal club, of course.



1973

Foreign worker recruitment stop due to the oil crisis.
Establishment of the “Coordination Group for Foreign Workers.”

1974

Stagnation of immigration in Offenbach as well, numbers begin to rise again starting from 1979.
Foundation of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Offenbach.

SUMMARY:

Founded 1983
 Registered as a club in 1985
 Ca. 60 members
 Association rooms in
 the Sprendlinger Landstrasse
 Object: Live colorfully
 under one roof

CONTACT PERSON:

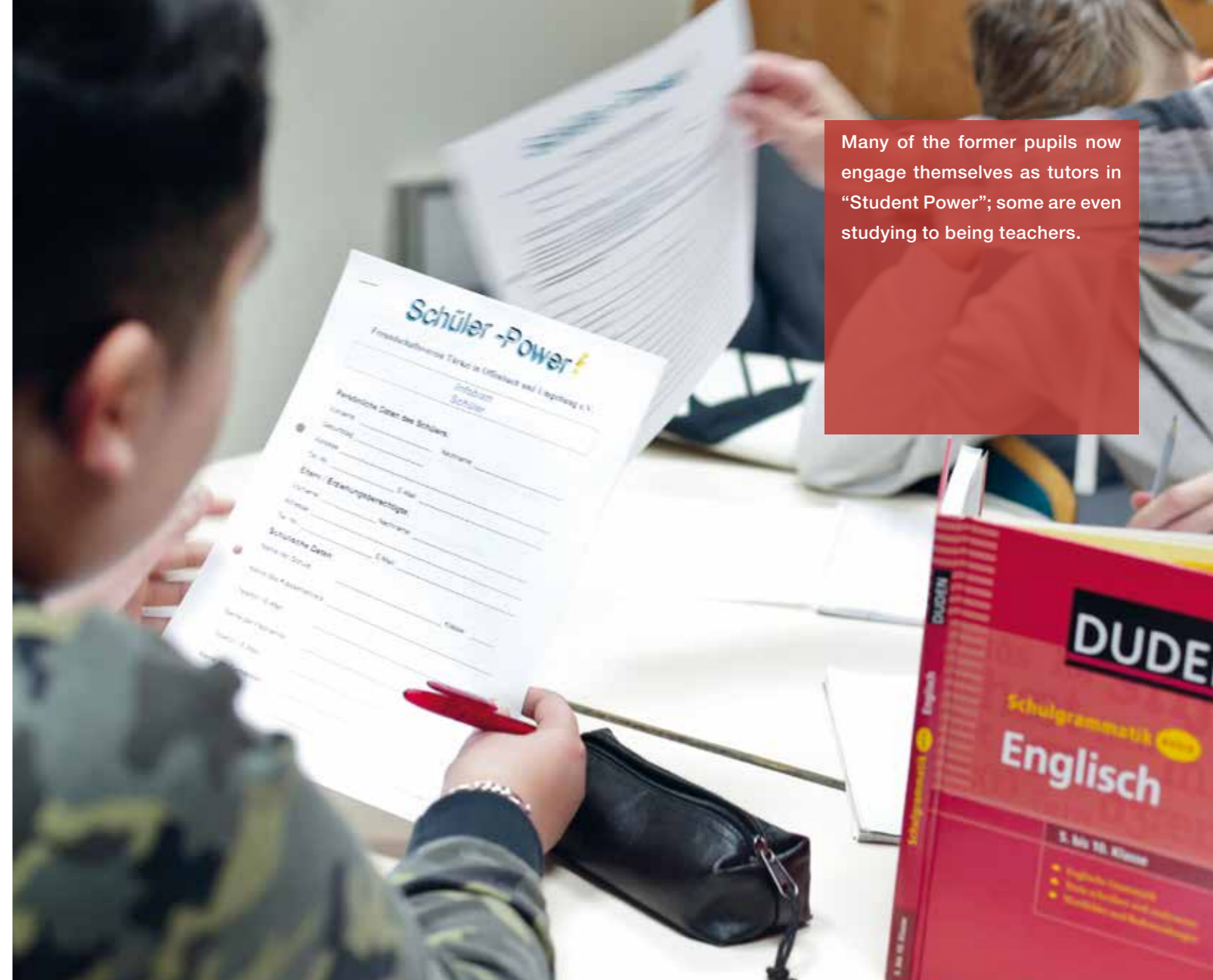
Ercan Saritas
 Neriman Akar

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Friendship Association Turkey

German and Turkish youths came to the idea of founding the Friendship Association at a folk dance course at the Adult Education Center in 1983. At the beginning, the focus was on education and social issues. Accordingly, the association established “Student Power” in 2007 and was one of the initiators of the antiracist alliance “Bunt statt braun”. The club members see themselves as well as a mixed group, as they come from the most diverse areas of Turkey and not just from here. Most are living in the third or fourth generation in Germany, and many have a German passport. “Turkish is often just a name,” says Chairman Ercan Saritas. What is more important is our shared experience. On Fridays, we meet for games, cooking, and to talk, and we often decide what is done together. “On Sundays folklore is on the menu – which is simply a lot of fun.”



Many of the former pupils now engage themselves as tutors in “Student Power”; some are even studying to being teachers.



1975

The first “Day of Foreign Fellow Citizens”, now the “Cultural Festival of Nations”.
 Foundation of the Romanian Orthodox Church Congregation in Offenbach.

1977

Establishment of the precursor of today’s Serbian Cultural Association and the Greek community in Offenbach.



Far more than involvement in the Dragon Cup – the members of the club contribute to many activities in Offenbach.

Ideas are born at the kitchen table

The Club looks back with pride on the tenth anniversary of its tutoring program Student Power. “The concept came to me at my kitchen table, and Dr. Bienussa, the School District Administrator then, played a great roll,” recalls Hanife Gürzöglü. More than 600 pupils have received tutoring so far, currently there are 50 pupils from 12 nations participating in Student Power. A maximum of five children or youths from the third grade onward participate in each study

group. “We had to learn the education system here as well; the keel must be set for secondary education at this very early age. Actually, we initially wanted to offer tutoring from the fifth grade onward,” says Hanife Gürzöglü.

Moreover, parents also participate regularly as students through obligatory seminars on the use of media or given instruction on they too can tutor their children better. “One must understand

that in Turkey and in many Arab countries, parents believe all school responsibility lies with the teachers, while this is different in Germany,” explains Mehmet Harmanci. Student Power is also a part of the city network Parents School. The Friendship Association’s engagement has been fostered greatly by the support of the Youth Welfare Office.

A Colorful Together

Ayhan Hishis from the Friendship Association is one of the co-initiators of the Offenbach alliance “Bunt statt braun”, which counts nature enthusiast, unions and various other clubs and associations in the city amongst its membership. The neo-fascist NSU Affair was the trigger to form this alliance in 2012. Working groups came together to stage events, panel discussions and a human chain against racism was formed as a concept for a planned anti-discrimination office in the city of Offenbach was born. “We meet every five to six weeks and truly appreciate the constructive cooperation from everyone,” says Ayhan Hishis.

The Friendship Association Turkey is an integral part of the Offenbach Community. In addition to the members’ diverse commitment, the association participates in city celebrations and festivities.

However, it was decided several years ago that they would no longer be a part of the Cultural Festival of Nations. “This was a majority decision of our members, as the festival is still regarded as a foreigners’ gathering. But do we want to be foreigners in 40 years?”, explained the second chairperson Meriman Akar openly. The Friendship Association participates however greatly in the Celebration of Associations and is always

represented with a large, well-visited stand. The Association also fosters numerous contacts to Offenbacher campaigns and other friendships associations in greater Offenbach. It hosts joint readings with the Heinrich Heine Club where German and Turkish poetry is recited in both languages.



1978

Amendment of Law: Permanent residence permit after five years and right of residence after eight years.



1980

Asylum seekers from Gambia begin being housed in an empty resident house on the Spessartring street.

SUMMARY:

Founded 1989
 Ca. 600 members
 Muslim Congregation
 Mosque and congregation rooms

CONTACT PERSON::

Baltit Elbachir

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Moroccan Islamic Cultural Center

Abdelkader Rafoud founded the Moroccan Islamic Cultural Center and lead it as its Chairman for many years, today working as an advisor. The initial premises for its approx. 60 founding members was on the Kaiserstrasse, from which it later moved to the Domstrasse. In 2000, the El Fatah Mosque was built in a former market, which is also used as a meeting place today. The Imam heads the religious affairs of the Center, while the Executive Board of the Cultural Center addresses secular issues. "The Chairman has to don many hats, as we provide the mosque, religious studies and sports under one roof," explained Mohamed Santolalla, who served as the Center's Chairman until December 2016, whereupon Baltit Elbachir took over the helm. It is therefore important that the Chairman is able to focus on the cultural center affairs. Engagement in other clubs and institutions amongst its membership is encouraged and appreciated..



Frolic and play is on the menu for the preschoolers today. Many of the girls wear headscarves in the mosque out of respect, while not wearing one when outside.

1982

The Asylum Procedure Act becomes law. It regulates the asylum procedure in Germany and places the right to asylum in the German Constitution, also known as the Basic Law (Article 16a).



1983

The Act for Promoting the Return of Immigrants becomes law. Turkish and German youths form the Friendship Association of Turkey.



The homework for the weekend: Arabic reading and writing, religion and the foundations of Islam, such as the ritual of washing before prayer.

One cannot separate prayer from counseling

More than half of the members of the Moroccan Islamic Cultural Center have a German passport, and many are already second or third generation Germans. "Some Moroccans still do dream however of returning to their former homeland, but the reality looks different. Our suitcases are empty and stowed away," says Abdelkader Rafoud.

The Association recognizes that all too often children from larger families in

particular live in far too cramped living conditions and this causes greater difficulties for them in school. The parents simply cannot provide the educational support they need." The Offenbach network with its varied offering is better than in many other cities, but people must also come and accept our cheerful hospitality," explains Mohamed Santolalla. For this, the Center offers many possibilities.

Around 200 children from four to twelve years old from various Arab countries participate in Arabic or Islam lessons over the weekend. They are divided into seven different classes depending on their age and knowledge, and the Head of Youth Activities, Said Boukhoukh, maintains contact with German schools as well. Tables stand ready in the sports room for the mixed preschool group, but once a half an hour is up, it's recess and time for frolic and play.

The suitcases are empty

The older children greet visitors with "salam aleikum." Boys and girls are taught separately and learn the Arabic alphabet, Arabic reading and writing, religion and the foundations of Islam, such as the ritual of washing before prayer. "In the Center the children speak German almost exclusively, while Berber – the language of Marrocco – is often spoken amongst the families," explains the course leader Samira Santolalla. And

during the week, children and teenagers let loose with taekwondo and karate, which is seen by the Executive Board as anti-aggression and discipline training. The Center also has offerings for adults, like for example, literacy courses for more than just Moroccans and social counseling and assistance with forms. "One cannot separate prayer from counseling." So up to 800 believers come to Friday prayers, where discus-

sion groups and conversations are held.

The Executive Board maintains close ties to the city and community. For several years now, believers have been able to use the courtyard of the Albert Schweitzer School as a parking lot for Ramadan when coming to visit the mosque in the evening.



1984

Dissolution of the Coordination Group of Foreign Workers and City Council resolution to establish a Foreigners Advisory Council with appointed members of the city magistrate, political groups, various institutions and representatives of foreigners groups.¹

1985

First meeting of the Foreigners Advisory Council on February 1st. The most important task the preparation of a provisional Bylaw for the Formation of an Elected Foreigners Advisory Council in Offenbach.²

SUMMARY:

Founded 1996
 20 members
 No own premises
 Object: Promotion of the Vietnamese language and culture to all interested persons, courses on Integral Tai Chi

CONTACT PERSON:

Duc-Trong Do
 Ngoc-Hien Nguyen
 Minh-Hoat Nguyen

CONTACT:

Vietnamese Cultural Association
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Vietnamese Cultural Association

The first Vietnamese students came to Germany at the end of the 1960s from the west-oriented south of the then still divided country. After the end of the Vietnam War and the reunification of Vietnam in 1976, millions of Vietnamese fled their homeland over the South China Sea mostly in small boats, and hundreds of thousands were killed. This flight gave rise to the term “boat people.” The journalist Rupert Neudeck († 2016) and like-minded persons founded the aid committee “A Ship for Vietnam” and using the freighter “Cap Anamur” saved more than 10,000 people from the roaring seas and evils of pirates. Most were received by the then West Germany. Moreover, after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, many Vietnamese guest workers from the former GDR remained in the reunified Federal Republic. Now firmly anchored in their new home, numerous Vietnamese students started an initiative to preserve the language and culture of what had in the meantime become a large and thriving community of people. Although the club itself was founded in Frankfurt in 1996, its meetings have been held for the past ten years in Offenbach.



Schoolgirls of the Vietnamese school in national dress showing traditional graceful dance at the New Year's Celebration.

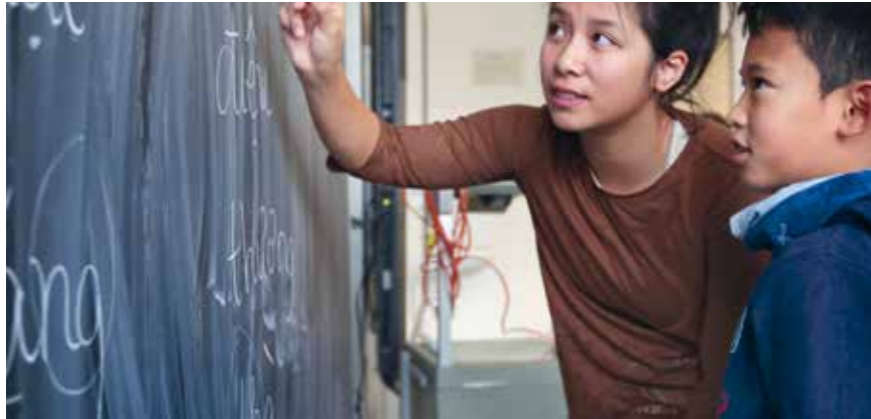
1986

Hessian State Treaty with the National Association of Jewish Communities in Hesse. The Offenbacher City Council passes the Bylaw for the Formation of an Elected Foreigners Advisory Council.¹



1987

Paolo Nesci resides as the first Chairman of the new Foreigners Advisory Council, where voter turnout was 26%, as opposed to just 2.5% in 2015.



Hoang-An Do was herself a student at the Vietnamese school. The fact she now leads courses in the Association is a point of particular pride.

Linking Tradition and a new Homeland

About 40 kids aged between six to 16 received two classroom lessons at the Theodor-Heuss-Schule each Saturday. They are divided into three classes based on age and language level. Some Germans also attend, including, for example, Sarah, a language researcher. Saturday lessons are very demanding for the youngest students. "Sometimes the energy just isn't there after a week of normal school," says Hoang-An Do, who with a colleague instructs the 15

children from ages of six to ten. "Moreover, it is usually parents who want their children to learn to read and write Vietnamese." This is not the case for Jessica (16), Vanessa (13) and Isabell (13). They find learning fun. "It's awesome to be able to speak two languages, and it makes learning other foreign languages easier," says Vanessa. The three girls were born in Germany and have both European and Vietnamese first names. "It has

even become popular amongst families to give their children European names. Their Vietnamese names are however used at the club," explains Hoang-An Do. Families come from all over the region to Offenbach to enable their children to learn more about the traditional Vietnamese culture and language. "A language is more than just words. It also contains the Vietnamese history and way of thinking and tradition. To master all means to broaden one's horizons,"



1990

Increased immigration from Eastern Europe, primarily through repatriation of Romanian and Polish and Roma peoples.

A language is more than just words

says Hung Trinh in representation of the Executive Board. While the children receives lessons and study, the parents meet in the auditorium, and prepare food and drinks for recess or take part on integral tai chi courses, which take place simultaneously.

Hung Trinh explains, "Integral Tai Chi is more than physical activity. It is a movement that brings body and mind into harmony." The group headed by Kieu-Nga Nguyen wears yellow shirts that

accentuate the group's beliefs. The participants follow the flowing movements of master Kieu-Nga Nguyen with full concentration, where except for brief instructions, only breathing is heard.

The New Year's or Middle Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival, mark important dates in the association's calendar. "Our regard for tradition is grounded very practical reasons. Many of our participants relatives' still

live in Vietnam, to which the children should continue to maintain contact," says Hung Trinh. "Yet despite their ties to their historical roots, the Vietnamese community is grateful to have found a new home in Germany." Close ties are fostered with Offenbach's neighboring Farm for Children and Youth'. The Cultural Association contributes to the program of numerous summer festivals with dances and martial arts demonstrations.



1991

New regulation of the rights of foreigners: Easier conditions are set for becoming a German citizen.

SUMMARY:

Founded 1997
 Ca. 40 members
 In the Rhine-Main area
 Cultural association
 No own premises

CONTACT PERSON:

Valentina Förster
 Zeno Galea
 Emanoela Kern
 Dorothea Krampol
 Doina Lynch

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Romanian Community in the Rhine-Main Region (CROM)

Even though the association “Comunitatea Romanilor Din Rhin-Main” or “CROM” was officially founded in 1999, its beginnings date back to 1997. The Romanians living in the region wanted to exchange in their native language and give their children the opportunity to play sports with other Romanians. In the late 1990s, political developments in their homeland had to be understood in their native language. Today, the association focuses on cultural events and activities and assisting Romanian citizens orient themselves in the region. “The integration work reached its apex between 2012 and 2015. Since then, there has been a steady decline in the orientation assistance work we provide and increased stability in attendance of the German courses we offer,” explained Dorothea Krampol, Board Member of CROM. Since 2017, CROM has become an accredited integration course provider before the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees meaning all German courses offered by the CROM community are open to all immigrants.



In 2015, CROM shared the Integration Prize of the City of Offenbach together with the Romanian Orthodox Church Community.

1992

Amendment of the Hessian Municipal Ordinance: Anchoring of the Foreigner Advisory Council in law – all municipalities with more than 1000 registered non-nationals must establish a council.

**1996**

Foundation of the Vietnamese Cultural Association in Frankfurt, now anchored in Offenbach for over ten years.



Dorothea Krampol and Valentina Förster lead German courses at the family center ZION in the Mathilde District in Offenbach, where immigrants from Romania and Moldavia are able to take language lessons twice a week.

Close networks for better support

The official postal address indicates that CROM does not have its own premises. New venues must continually be found in the Rhein-Main area for the Association's cultural activities such as concerts, readings, film or various art exhibitions. "Our activities show interest and inform the community regarding current cultural developments in Romania," explains Dorothea Krampol, who is responsible for cultural programming, among other things. In June 2015, she spearheaded

the organization of the "Frankfurt-Rhine-Main Romanian Cultural Days", a festival which enjoyed great popularity in the press and throughout the region. The Association's schedule will be marked by a diverse cultural program once more in 2017 to celebrate the Association's 20th anniversary.

The Association's management places particular emphasis on providing assistance to immigrants from Romania and

Moldavia, where the Romanian language is also spoken. According to Ms. Krampol, "At the moment, we offer language courses and counseling sessions in the ZION Family Center (Zentrum für Integration und organisierte Nachbarschaft) in Offenbach's Mathilde District and in the offices of the Frankfurt Caritas Association." The Association also offers close individual accompaniment in special integration cases. "We are often able help people out of the peril caused by missing



1998-2002

Development of the first strategies for opening the city administration to all cultures by Beate Röschmann, Head of the Human Resources and Organizational Development Department along with Dr. Matthias Schulze-Böing.



1998

Establishment of the "Coordination Center Living Together" in Offenbach's city administration and the hiring of Municipal Integration Officer, Luigi Masala. Establishment of the Moroccan Islamic Cultural Center in Offenbach.

Cultural Commitment

information and undue naiveté." On the other hand, many immigrants are very skeptical at first that our services are in fact free and therefore effective, as honorary or charity work is far less widespread in Romania.

About twelve to fifteen students come together twice a week in the family center. "Frau Krampol and Frau Förster are good teachers," says Cristina, who has been attending German courses for some time and works in providing nursing services. All parts of the body are touched upon from head to toe, mostly in German, some with Romanian explanations. Nicoleta writes encouragingly that she learned about the course offerings at a consultation meeting. A young couple, Elena and Marius have been on the road and itinerant for two years and came into contact with CROM due to a translation request. Adrian is here for the first time and tells

in broken German that he learned the language himself over the Internet and has been in Germany for three months. In addition to German, the participants also study the history, politics, elections and holidays in the new homeland, just to name a few. Since 2012, Dorothea Krampol has been coordinating the integration project. She and her colleagues are well networked in the region. They belong to the Council of Cultures and the working group Integration and the Foreigner Advisory Council in Offenbach, while maintaining close contacts with Caritasverband, the International Federation (IB) and the volunteer center.

CROM is often invited to take part in lecture series or panel discussions, such as the 2016 conference "Migration – Enterprise – Engagement" hosted by the Federal Citizen Engagement Network (BBE). Yet the community also organizes public

events on topics of specific or general interest, like, for example, the March 2017 seminar "Security on the Internet". This event was aimed at young people, in particular, not just from the Romanian community, but also the public at large as a joint project of the Hessian police as part of the working group "Safety for Everyone", in which CROM has been a member since its founding in 2012.



SUMMARY:

14 members online
 Ca. 50-60 interested
 Founded 2001
 Revived 2016
 Use of premises of
 the St. Peter Congregation
 Object: Polish culture and language
 accessibility

CONTACT PERSON:

Joachim Kiel

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St. Peter Catholic Congregation
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Polish Cultural Association Misericordia e.V.

Polish people are the fourth largest migrant group in the City of Offenbach.

Many Polish immigrants came to Germany after the Second World War as refugees, whereas from the 1970s political or economic reasons compelled many to leave their native Poland. The Polish people in Germany are often regarded as almost “invisible” in the literature on immigration; that is, the community stressed integration and keeping a low profile in the 1980s. Things have changed however. In 2012, a study conducted by the Institute for Foreign Relations in Stuttgart concluded that the younger generation is now intercultural: The children are bilingual and more than happy to speak Polish with other people.

The Polish Cultural Association Misericordia – meaning Kindness – is as well. It maintains a close connection to the Catholic community not just through the use of shared spaces. It was founded in 2001 and after numerous initial activities hibernated to be re-awakened in 2016.



Pastor Tadeusz Michalik has made many of his idea a reality, one of which being the Frauentreff or Women's Group.

**1999**

The first Integration Prize in Offenbach is awarded to its first winner is Mr. Abdelkader Rafoud. Establishment of the Romanian Community in the Rhine-Main Region (CROM).

**2000**

Reform of German Citizenship Law: German-born children of foreign parents are German citizens.



Ewa Zielinska leads five language courses for adults with great spirit and enthusiasm.

Great ideas for arriving home

Pastor Tadeusz Michalik membership in the Offenbach Polish community dates back to 2013. His ideas and commitment has revived the Polish Cultural Association Misericordia. It's Chairman Joachim Kiel and Secretary Ewa Zielinska work closely at his side.

On the pastor's initiative, ca. ten to fifteen young women have begun meeting each week since February 2015 for breakfast, exchange and activities. The

Association provides great aid whether through assisting in the completion of forms, visiting authorities and agencies or giving advice, to mention a few. "Although children are always present at our meetings, women are our primary concern; that is, making certain they feel at home in Offenbach," explains group leader Malgorzata Izycka Köth. At the moment, things are a bit spontaneous, but in the future monthly meetings with German mothers are also planned.

The idea for German courses also came from Pastor Michalik. He was able to bring aboard Ewa Zielinska, who had studied German in Poland. She now teaches groups of up to ten adults each on three different evenings. She noted "Women show more perseverance." Moreover, the groups of participants have changed, many younger Poles have studied German in their homeland. Rather complicated texts are read and translated as a group. Explanations are

New impulses in association life

given in Polish, as according to Ms. Zielinska, otherwise the bar would be set too high.

As of February 2017, there are two Offenbach primary schools giving native Polish instruction to Polish children. Pastor Michalik has contributed greatly to this as well. Newly arrived children, particularly those that are older, have the biggest difficulties, according to Ms. Zielinska. Not only is language often lacking, the children's psyches often suffer from the unwanted changes to their lives. The Association is planning to offer counselling services to parents, meetings and holiday activities for children and youths, as well as excursions and hikes throughout the surrounding area. In order to realize this, Pastor Spezia wishes to tap specialists from the congregation, e.g., psychologists for the counseling

groups and tourist experts for the excursions.

Joachim Kiel emphasizes: "The club should grow; we have the ideas. Now we just have to implement them." The many interested persons, he believes, simply need to show the courage to join the Association. He knows this reticence well from his experiences in the former communist Poland. However, for

the many activities, like parish festivals, collective gardening and more, the assistance and interest is there.

The Association's connection to the City of Offenbach will also continue to grow through joint fairs with the other Catholic congregations in Offenbach and closer contact with official agencies and the Foreigner Advisory Council planned for the future.



2001

Establishment of the Polish Cultural Association Misericordia and the Intercultural Women's Center – from 2010 onward the Kurdish Cultural Center Offenbach am Main.

2004

The Offenbach City Council passes the communal-level integration strategy "Many cultures. Everyone an Offenbacher."

SUMMARY:

Founded 2014
 Ca. 30 members
 Cultural association
 No own premises

CONTACT PERSON:

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 Eleonora Hristova

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Bulgarians in Offenbach

“Bulgarians in Offenbach” is still a very young association. Irena Nencheva came up with the idea of meeting regularly in 2013 before returning to her native Bulgaria. At the beginning, meetings took place every three weeks in various locations, yet the city of Offenbach and Ali Karakale from AWO (Workers Welfare Association) helped to find the club a permanent location. He and Winfried Wille from the International Federation (IB) also provided support in founding the association.

As it was founded, the Association received further financial support, which it used mainly to buy (work)books for learning on site, dictionaries, a MP3 player and other material such as a copier. “This provided the basis for our Association. Having the neighborhood office in the Mathilde District is ideal for our members, students and guests,” says Eleonora Hristova. The Bulgarians have already participated in Mathildenplatzfest four times. “We are well represented there with a small tasting room and our dance group.”

**2006**

The “Coordination Center Living Together” is integrated into the Offenbach Office for Employment Promotion, Statistics and Integration under the direction of Dr. Matthias Schulze-Böing and the first budget for integration tasks is thus created..

**2008**

A Hessian study shows that migrant organizations wish to help shape society through civic engagement.²



Spring campaign at the Mathildenplatz – ca. 30 people from the club worked vigorously during Voluntary Day 2015.

Speaking and dancing in one

The Bulgarians in Offenbach have exclusive use of the neighborhood office at Mathildenplatz on Saturday afternoons. German is taught for three hours in the back room, while Bulgarian dances are rehearsed in the front for two hours. In the evening, there is time for a joint discussion and questions and tutoring as well as celebration. “We are however an open club; this is the norm in Offenbach,” says Eleonora Hristova. People from Macedonia and the former

Yugoslavia as well as the partners from mixed marriage couples often participate. What unites us is the Bulgarian language.

Eleonora Hristova has ten to twelve students every Saturday afternoon. The German studies graduate is convinced that it is easier for the students to learn German in groups where participates speak the same native language. “This allows me to explain something quick-

ly in Bulgarian.” Otherwise, she speaks almost exclusively German with the groups. Georgi works in drywall construction and has been living in Germany for four years. He comes to the course because of his wife and believes that his language skills can still be improved. Although it is late in the afternoon, the students are all still working eagerly. This lesson focuses on numbers. The lessons cover a variety of topics and there is always time to tell a little joke.

Remember to breathe deeply

The eight-person dance group around Lubov Kasim stands in a semicircle, hand-in-hand. Supported with encouraging whistles and noisy “hepps”, we take a light-footed step to the right in a circle and switch to the left. Once the song is finished, another dance follows, composed in part by difference dancers. The dance instructor is engaged and demands full concentration even for the sixth dance of the day, this time supported by the song of a woman in attendance, Denka. “I’ve always sung and I love our performances at concerts and festivals in the region.” Her son-in-law has been with Bulgari for four months, and her granddaughter is studying German in the room next door. Stella has been a member of the group for half a year. She has been to many Bulgarian weddings and absolutely had to learn the dances. “We are still a small club, but we are envisioning offering dance

classes for children in the future. We would need another instructor however. Were more members to join, the need for other activities would come about as well,” says Eleonora Hristova. Our location at Mathildenplatz would then be too small, but we are not quite there yet.

The number of immigrants from Bulgaria continues to rise, as they have little opportunity to build practically anything in

their own country. “We say that if you can breathe normally, you know you are at home.” According to Ms. Hristova a big step forward in integration is learning to communicate well. In addition to a safe workplace, this helps people from Bulgaria to feel at home. “Otherwise one is alone. That is why the dances and the meetings are so important to us.”



2010-2013

As one of the six “model integration regions” in Hesse, the city is developing numerous integration measures through this same-named promotional program, including a partnership with local autonomous migrant organizations.³



2010

City Council resolution “Cultural Diversity in the Workplace” is passed to encourage opening the City Administration to all cultures. Panel discussion “The World at Home in Offenbach” was the first event of “Model Integration Region Offenbach”.

SUMMARY:

Founded 2016
 Ca. 100 members
 Women only
 No own premises
 Object: Improve the situation of women

CONTACT PERSON:

Nezire Özgür
 Hatice Yikit

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Sara – Kurdish Women’s Council Offenbach

The Kurdish Women’s Council Offenbach or Sara has set large and rather political goals. “We have nothing against men, but even in this day and age many women are still oppressed,” says Nezire Özgür, Chairwoman of the Sara Women’s Council, the short name of this still young club. The dedicated women of Sara have taken up battling against forced marriages, child marriages and so-called honor killings, and aim to help women achieve greater equality in society at large.

The Sara Women’s Council is not starting from scratch however. It works in close cooperation with the Municipal Women’s Office, the Office for Employment Promotion, Statistics and Integration and the Kurdish Association Navenda Cand a Kurd, the latter being founded in 2001 as a women’s center, yet then opened to men in 2010 as a cultural center.



The woman’s meetings are animated. There is a lot to be discussed, whether the next civil campaign or private matters.

2011

Strategy workshop “Intercultural Opening” takes place simultaneously with the development of the municipal strategy “Cultural Diversity at the Workplace.” Establishment of the working group “Intercultural Opening” and changes in the procedure for filling job vacancies in the city administration.

2011

The MigraPro statistical program calculates the proportion of people with a migration background in the urban population for the first time at 55.2% for 2010. This has risen since; In 2016, it was 60.7%.



The Kurdish Women’s Council opened its group to present a “Journey through Mesopotana” during the Offenbach Intercultural Weeks and the wonderful sounds on the stringed Saz.

Mothers are role models

Nezire Özgür left school at the age of ten and came to Germany in the eighth grade as a 15-year-old. “I understood nothing and felt totally lost.” Today the four-time mother works for Caritas in the ELMO project, among others, helping families help their children. “I was unable to catch up with school, but I want more for my children.” Until recently, she wore a headscarf, yet for several years reflected on why. “Does the headscarf belong to my religion or

is it just a symbol?” Her beliefs have not changed, for her, humanity and justice are foremost – “yet for this a headscarf is not necessary.” Too often wearing headscarves is a rule of men, whether the husband or father. “Covering of women is a degradation,” says Esmeralda Cetin with conviction. She describes herself as a seeker in her religion.

At the Sara Women’s Council, the fo-

cus is on the human being, but above all on the woman. “Tolerance is very important at our regular meetings,” says Nezire Özgür. Religion is left out, when the women of very different backgrounds attend the short talks at breakfast, talk with one another and mutually help and support each other. Many come originally from Kurdistan, but also Turkish, Armenian, German and Iranian women come to the meetings. The meetings unite interest in

All women are welcome

working together and above all foster our community.

Through lectures and seminars, the Association wishes to enable affected women to solve their own problems independently. Events on domestic violence, Islam, violence against women, and environmental justice have been held. “We still have many ideas. If we had the appropriate rooms, we would set up a women’s dance group, organize tutoring for children or even host art projects,” says Nezire Özgür. Education and educating one another is the most important thing.

Seminars for men are also planned, “because they too should be thinking about women’s issues.” In addition, the Sara Women’s Council intends to deepen its contacts with other women’s movements, organizations and

institutions in the city and increase its cooperation with them.

Many of the women of the Sara Women’s Council are also active in the Kurdish Cultural Center Navenda Cand a Kurd. The clubs join together for festival presentations, and one see the same cooperation and joy at Kurdish Folklore dances. “The Kurds are an old people that have unfortunately

been somewhat lost in history. Yet perhaps this is a good thing, as perhaps Kurds cannot then repeat the mistakes of their past,” said Esmeralda Cetin half-jokingly. For them, integration means that all people come together and therefore all women are welcome at the Sara Women’s Council.



2012-2015

Immigration from South Eastern European countries becomes a central focus of municipal integration work.

2014

As a continuation of the “Model Integration Region” launch of the promotional program “WIR” to develop sustainable integration structures in all of Hessen.⁴ “Bulgarians in Offenbach e.V.” is founded.

SUMMARY:

Founded 2016
 Ca. 50 members, 25 active players
 No own premises
 Object: Play football together and
 get young people off the streets

CONTACT PERSON:

Spiros Soulakis
 Panagiotis Cousis

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FC Asteras Offenbach e.V.

The FC Asteras Offenbach e.V. was founded on April 17, 2016, although it was in November of the previous year that thoughts were first given for drafting the association's bylaws. After the football association Hellas disbanded in 2010, Offenbach was left without a Greek sports club, and one noticed that association life was almost totally absent in the Greek community, particularly amongst boys in puberty. Interest in traditional club activities, such as dancing, was simply absent.

This gave the impetus to form a new Greek association. As some of the founders were already playing indoor football (futsal) with some success, Asteras was founded to become the first Greek futsal club outside Greece. Futsal is still not as common in Germany. This gives the young club prospects for a greater ascent and success as would be possible were they merely playing football.



The name Asteras means star. As a logo, the members have chosen a five-pointed star, which is the exact number of members of its Executive Board.

2014

A survey of the city administration conducted by the working group "Intercultural Opening" reveals 18% of the workforce in the core city administration have a migrant background and 22% of the employees at the municipal jobcenter MainArbeit.

2015

Summary report "10 years Integration Strategy" and its update. Opening of an initial reception center for up to 1000 refugees. Closure in April 2016. No significant number of allocations of refugees to Offenbach.



Four of five board members of FC Asteras: (from left) Nikulaus Velentzas, Eleftherios Tzanis, Spiros Soulakis, Panagiotos Cousis.

Sport is integration

The German Football Association (DFB) calls futsal an emerging form of indoor football. It is also recognized by the FIFA World Cup as such. The sport originated in South America and its name comes from the Spanish words “futbol” and “sala” (hall), meaning ultimately indoor football. Besides the FC Asteras, presently there is only one other futsal club (Spanish) with whom Asteras collaborates and plays often.

FC Asteras currently has a team of 25 players aged from 16 to 29 years of age, of which the adults may play in league games. So far, only Greeks are members and players, but the language used in training and games is German. Greek is rarely heard. “This helps the newcomers to arrive in the country, and is part of the discipline that underlines team sports,” says Trainer and Chairman Spiros Soulakis. About 30 percent of the members came to Germany only in the

past two years, as they saw no prospects in their home country. “Offenbach with its very large Greek community is an important contact point for young Greeks, and having contact to countrymen helps with settling in.” Since they started playing futsal together, some young people have even returned to the Offenbach Greek community.

The five members of the Executive Board all grew up in Germany and have adopt-

On the ball together

ed many of the proverbial virtues considered by them to be typical German: Discipline, order, accuracy, correctness, reliability. “These are augmented by the positive qualities of Greeks like openness, cordiality, hospitality, vivacity. I think both sides are very important and complement each other,” laughs Panagiotis Cousis, Deputy Chairman.

It is explicit in the Asteras’ statutes that

its members must represent their club well in public. “It is important to adhere to rules. This is especially important for young people. In addition to sport, we also encourage social competency,” says Spiros Soulakis. “Sport is integration. If we as a Greek club strengthen the identity of our players, this gives them security throughout.” For this reason, the trainer maintains strong relationships within the club, and also with the Greek

community at large. In the coming years the senior team of players over 18 years old intends to climb into higher leagues. Children and young people should also be given the opportunity to play futsal. “We want to get them off the street. For this however, we need more indoor hall time, which is unfortunately very scarce in Offenbach at the moment,” explains the Trainer.



2016

“Intercultural competence” becomes operational by the working group “Intercultural Opening” and the creation of a procedure to determine the intercultural competency of job candidates in the selection process.



2016

The German contribution of the Architecture Biennale in Venice: “Offenbach is almost alright” – an example of the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and ways of thinking. The related visit of the German President, Joachim Gauck, in Offenbach.

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