

CITY: HAMBURG



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The Elbphilharmonie has a musical education programme offering interactive concerts and musical activities, such as this 'family day' event, for different groups of people

# HAMBURG: PROMOTING INTEGRATION VIA INTERCULTURAL PROJECTS

Interview with Laura-Helen Rüge

The Ministry of Culture's aim is to support arts in the city of Hamburg. Intercultural projects for migrants and native Germans can be in different disciplines (e.g. theatre, music, fine arts, films, festivals). In 2018, Hamburg had a large fund for projects for refugees. The Ministry of Culture's general aim is to support diversity and the projects of intercultural teams, which includes giving those who live in Hamburg, but are originally from other countries, a voice and helping them to be successful in Hamburg.

**#CulturalEurope**  
 Hamburg has a fund for cultural projects to help empower refugees so that they can successfully integrate and find their way in the city  
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**Progressive Post: Do you have examples of successful projects where funding from the City of Hamburg has helped migrants integrate in the city of Hamburg and in Germany and helped migrants integrate with Germans?**

Laura-Helen Rüge: In 2015, many refugees arrived in Hamburg. Most of the theatres, museums, alternative art spaces etc. reacted in a welcoming way. The Deutsches Schauspielhaus, a theatre, let refugees sleep in their rooms, the Thalia Theater founded the 'Embassy of hope', where refugees can, for example, learn the German language, ask for legal support and act in the theatre.

Together with a many foundations in Hamburg we launched a fund for cultural projects. The City put 200,000 euro into the pot and the foundations matched it with the same amount. That enabled us to spend 400,000 euro on cultural projects with refugees. To access the funding, the projects have to be designed and planned together with or by refugees. The aim is to support their ideas, to help them become empowered to take action themselves to

integrate into the city, to network with each other and with local Germans and to find their way in the bureaucratic systems in Germany.

**How successful has this overall effort been for integration? What have been the most important (and perhaps surprising) positive results?**

The most important thing is for everyone to learn that diversity is an opportunity and that diversity is something from which we all gain. Looking at the world through someone else's eyes always opens up new options. One project, which has been going on in Hamburg for 19 years, is very special indeed: 'Hajusom'. Its focus is to produce art together with, for example, musicians and artists, from different countries. The name 'Hajusom' is the first two letters from the names of three people in the very first group, Hatice, Jusef and Omied, who were unaccompanied young refugees who either fled, were deported or have become citizens of Hamburg.

'Hajusom' is a community of performers who develop interdisciplinary theatre productions. Their plays are coproduced with theatres in Hamburg,

Duesseldorf, Muenser and Berlin and are shown throughout the world in international tours.

The community helps refugees (who have mostly come here without their parents) to find a place to live in the City of Hamburg. They try to give them jobs in the team and generally help them out when they can. <http://www.hajusom.de/english/hajusom/about-hajusom/>

**Can and should similar projects be set up in Germany and in other cities across the EU? How easy is it for them to carry out similar projects? What would you recommend for them to do?**

In my opinion Hajusom is a great project because the team there works very sensitively with refugees who have suffered trauma on their journeys to Germany and they are more than just a place for work and arts. They are a community that helps people find their way in the city as well as in the world of arts. There should be more projects like this.

**How is music used for cultural integration ?**

The Elbphilharmonie is a musical education programme offering interactive concerts and musical activities for every each group. The Elbphilharmonie has brought a lot of attention to musical education from the beginning. There are a lot of projects going on. For example, they offer concerts even for babies, etc. (see more: <https://www.elbphilharmonie.de/en/children-and-families>)

**What has been the impact on citizens of this cultural integration policy?**

The aim of the Mayor of Hamburg is that every child living in Hamburg should have visited the Elbphilharmonie at least once. We'll see if this will work out...

**#CulturalEurope**  
 The aim of 'Hajusom' is to produce art together with musicians and artists from different countries  
 @hh\_bkm



**> AUTHOR**  
 Laura-Helen Rüge is in charge of Intercultural Projects in the Ministry of Culture of the City of Hamburg. She is responsible for intercultural projects, which means that artists with a migrant background that live in Hamburg can ask for funding to carry out their projects as can native Germans to carry out their intercultural projects.