

Connecting Über den Tellerrand Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Technology Based Approach

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Abstract

This project sought to enhance the internal communication and engagement techniques of Über den Tellerrand, a German NGO, during the COVID-19 pandemic. We conducted interviews, focus groups, and a survey to learn about communication and engagement issues as well as best communication practices during the pandemic. Using the collected data, we created communication guidelines to improve online communication at Über den Tellerrand. We recommended the implementation of communication guidelines and further research into engagement techniques at the organization's other satellites.

Executive Summary

Historically, Germany has served as a hub for immigration. After World War II, Germany initiated a foreign labor recruitment program to boost the economy, bringing in hundreds of thousands of immigrants. In the past decade, the Syrian Civil War led to increased numbers of displaced people into Germany. In 2019, Germany was the most hospitable nation in the European Union (EU) for asylum applicants. While Germany’s liberal policies generated opposition, the country also experienced a “welcome culture,” with the birth of over 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) between 2013 and 2016 with the mission of helping refugees integrate into society. One of these NGOs was Über den Tellerrand.

Über den Tellerrand emerged in 2013 from pro-refugee demonstrations at Oranienplatz in Berlin. German civilians engaged with refugees but lacked a true understanding of the refugees for whom they demonstrated. At the square, they started cooking together, sharing stories over food and connecting on a personal level. In 2014, Über den Tellerrand was officially founded. Today, the organization has 40 satellite locations in six countries. The Über den Tellerrand network, headquartered in Berlin, consists of staff, satellites, and volunteers with various backgrounds. Together these intercultural communities break down prejudices through various events such as cooking, language cafes, and sporting events, fostering an open and tolerant society. However, Über den Tellerrand’s mission has become more difficult as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly from communication and network engagement standpoints.

Figure E.1

Über den Tellerrand’s Kitchen on the Run Project



Our project sought to enhance Über den Tellerrand's internal communication and engagement techniques during the COVID-19 pandemic. We identified **three objectives**:

1. **IDENTIFY**: Learn best practices in network communication within other organizations similar to Über den Tellerrand.
2. **EVALUATE**: Assess the current status of the organization and how it has adapted to the pandemic.
3. **DESIGN**: Create a strategy for communication, networking, and community engagement for Über den Tellerrand.

In order to learn about best practices in network communication, we reached out to 13 organizations with similar missions to Über den Tellerrand. We successfully scheduled **interviews with three organizations**. We first interviewed the Angels-Net Foundation, an organization that provides services to immigrants and refugees in the Worcester area. We also interviewed the Goethe-Institut in Boston, an organization that focuses on providing German language instruction to students. Last, we interviewed a representative of African Community Education (ACE), an organization that provides educational services to African children in Worcester. For each interview, we recorded a transcript and employed an inductive coding method to identify key themes.

To evaluate Über den Tellerrand's status since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we used **questionnaires and focus groups** to conduct research. We analyzed the results of three separate questionnaires Über den Tellerrand conducted in 2019 and 2020. Moreover, we created our own questionnaire to ask questions tailored to our project. To receive more in-depth analysis, we conducted two separate focus groups: one with staff members from the Berlin office and one with representatives of multiple satellites, including Cologne, Frankfurt, Freiburg, and Hamburg. We also used inductive coding to analyze the results of both focus groups.

In order to develop a strategy for communication, networking, and community engagement for Über den Tellerrand, we first needed to identify an advantageous path for a communication framework. After evaluating the status of Über den Tellerrand and analyzing the practices of other organizations, we decided to draft a **communication guidelines document**. The document lays out clear standards of communication while also reflecting Über den Tellerrand's informal style. After receiving feedback from the Berlin Network Team, we made structural, stylistic, and content related refinements to the guidelines document.

The interviews with other organizations allowed us to draw **four key takeaways**. We learned that organizations are finding new ways to promote one-on-one connections online. Next, we discovered organizations are being adaptable as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing new techniques for communication. Moreover, we noticed that organizations valued taking measures to excite members in their network about change. Last, we learned that having a clear purpose behind the use of each communication platform provides clarity when communicating online.

From our survey data, we realized that some satellites not only managed to grow their communities in 2020, but also found success with in-person events during the pandemic.

Moreover, we learned that the main demand for participants was for Über den Tellerrand to **host more events**. With more analysis, we realized there was a demand for events that require personal engagement between people. We also noted that the foundational events like cooking and language events received strong support from participants. Moreover, we learned that social media has not been a significant mechanism for attracting new people, and has instead been primarily used for event advertisement.

Analysis of the focus groups showed a **decrease in one-on-one and spontaneous interactions** in Über den Tellerrand. The decrease in spontaneity correlated to staffers feeling overwhelmed due to the use of many online platforms. Other challenges included **decreased motivation levels** due to the shift of being online, as well as language barriers when communicating online. Despite the challenges, we noted several communication practices that satellites employed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic that would be advantageous to spread to the entire Über den Tellerrand network.

Following analysis of the focus groups and surveys, we determined that there were **five primary areas of improvement** in Über den Tellerrand's network engagement and communication structure. Assessing these areas of improvement as well as best practices from other organizations led us to **create a communication guidelines document** to provide standardized procedural suggestions that staff members can adopt. The document includes five main chapters, including an "Ingredients of Communication" chapter, which outlines three components that solidify Über den Tellerrand's communication and network engagement structure: fostering one-on-one connections, motivating others to collaborate, and creating spaces for feedback.

Our **recommendations** for Über den Tellerrand provide suggestions to improve one-on-one connections, spontaneous conversations, to enhance communication between staff, to connect satellites, to increase event participation, as well as to reinforce the feedback structure.

Based on the assessment and analysis from our results, we learned one main problem Über den Tellerrand faced was confusion using different platforms to communicate online. Staffers expressed a decrease in interpersonal and spontaneous conversation when communicating online, partially due to the confusion behind platform use. For these reasons, our team recommended **the implementation of a communication guidelines document**. This document provides guidelines and suggestions on how to communicate using the various platforms the organization uses while maintaining the theme of spontaneous and informal conversation among staffers, participants and volunteers.

Figure E.2

Communication Practices and Suggestions Document



COMMUNICATION PRACTICES & SUGGESTIONS ÜBER DEN TELLERRAND

A comprehensive guide to communication, networking,
and community outreach across satellites.



Staff members also expressed a decrease in engagement when communicating online, due to ‘Zoom fatigue’ from spending all day on Zoom calls. **To improve engagement and spontaneity, our team recommended Kumospace.** Kumospace is a free virtual platform that gives participants the ability to move around virtual rooms and engage with individuals with its spatial audio feature.

Figure E.3

The Team Testing Kumospace



Users have the opportunity to create different rooms based on the event or atmosphere they want to portray. Kumospace offers the opportunity for participants to engage with each other and offers the spontaneous, one-on-one communication Über den Tellerrand strives for. With Kumospace, staffers can create a coffee break room to de-stress and feel more engaged when interacting with each other.

Following the theme of connectivity, there have been challenges maintaining and connecting the network. We recommended staffers of Über den Tellerrand **use Miro as a visual planning tool** when planning events. Miro works as a collaboration tool that offers real-time edits and a white-board and sticky note feature to mimic planning events in person. By using Miro and Zoom or Kumospace, the combination of these platforms will offer more engaged meetings among staffers of various satellites when planning events. In addition, we recommended **advertising the importance of monthly meetings as well as having more satellite co-hosted events** to promote networking among participants and staffers. More co-hosted events among various satellites creates a more engaged atmosphere, where satellites can learn from each other about event formats and engagement techniques. With increased engagement within the Über den Tellerrand network, the organization can track the progress of the various satellites and offer assistance when needed. To form better engagement between staffers and participants, we recommended Über den Tellerrand **adopt a feedback mechanism and an in-person notebook structure** across its network. By enhancing its feedback

component, Über den Tellerrand can easily stay in touch with its participants', volunteers', and staffers' perspectives on the organization. With this feedback, Über den Tellerrand can refine its events or communication structure to fit the needs of the network.

Our recommendations were designed to improve online engagement and communication within the Über den Tellerrand community. We provided a set of recommendations to enhance the internal communication structure between staffers, volunteers, and participants. Moreover, our recommendations promote online engagement, offering Über den Tellerrand the online community atmosphere they have been striving for.

Über den Tellerrand plays an important role in bringing people together. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization continues to achieve its mission of creating a more inclusive society where cultures interact and connect with each other. Our Interactive Qualifying Project will allow Über den Tellerrand to strengthen connections between individuals and satellites, helping the organization achieve its mission as one team. Moreover, our project will supply Über den Tellerrand with the tools necessary to continue growing its network in a new online setting. Our recommendations and deliverables provide Über den Tellerrand with a centralized communication standard to facilitate communication among staff, volunteers, and participants, as well as strategies to foster more network participation and engagement. Further research regarding online platforms and communication strategies will provide Über den Tellerrand with opportunities to continue enhancing its online network engagement strategies.

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1.0 Introduction

There are over 80 million people forcibly displaced in the world today; more are forced to flee their land every year, each having to form new connections with minimal guidance in an unfamiliar place (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020). All of the challenges regarding displaced people have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the lowest levels of social interaction the planet has seen in a long time. How can people form new relationships, become friends, and integrate into society in the post-pandemic world?

Germany took in 1.1 million people in 2020, making it the 5th most receptive country for displaced people (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020). The large migration of people puts strain on the host country to effectively provide the resources needed for successful integration into a new society. To combat the issue, Über den Tellerrand was formed as a non-governmental organization (NGO) that creates spaces where people of different cultures can meet and connect through common interests. The global pandemic has hindered the progress towards inclusion and has left many people without access to social interaction. Despite these obstacles, Über den Tellerrand has found ways to engage German citizens and foster integration among refugees.

Über den Tellerrand continues to bring people together through various online programs (over Zoom) which feature an instructor who leads the virtual attendees through cooking tutorials, language sessions, and other events. While the events are engaging, they do not compare to in-person methods of social interaction. For a forcibly displaced person, participating in the social and cultural life of the host community is crucial for settling into their new environment (Dimitrov & Angelov, 2017). As a result of hosting strictly online events, Über den Tellerrand has seen a decrease in participation, which has hindered its mission of breaking down cultural barriers to create an equal society among people of all cultures. Intercultural coexistence in Germany relies on many factors including the tools used to cultivate communication between people. In order for Über den Tellerrand to continue connecting people, the effectiveness of its online communication is being re-evaluated to promote better social cohesion between participants, volunteers, and all 40 satellite locations that Über den Tellerrand coordinates across Germany and nearby countries.

Our project explored the most effective strategies to help Über den Tellerrand connect online. In addition, our work developed a strategy to enhance community engagement for the organization to allow for more growth in the future when restrictions are lifted. Our mission was to enhance Über den Tellerrand's internal communication and engagement techniques during the COVID-19 pandemic. We achieved our goal by completing three objectives. First, we identified best practices in network communication within organizations similar to Über den Tellerrand. Then we evaluated the current status of Über den Tellerrand and how the organization has adapted to the pandemic. Lastly, we designed a strategy for communication, networking, and community engagement.

2.0 Background

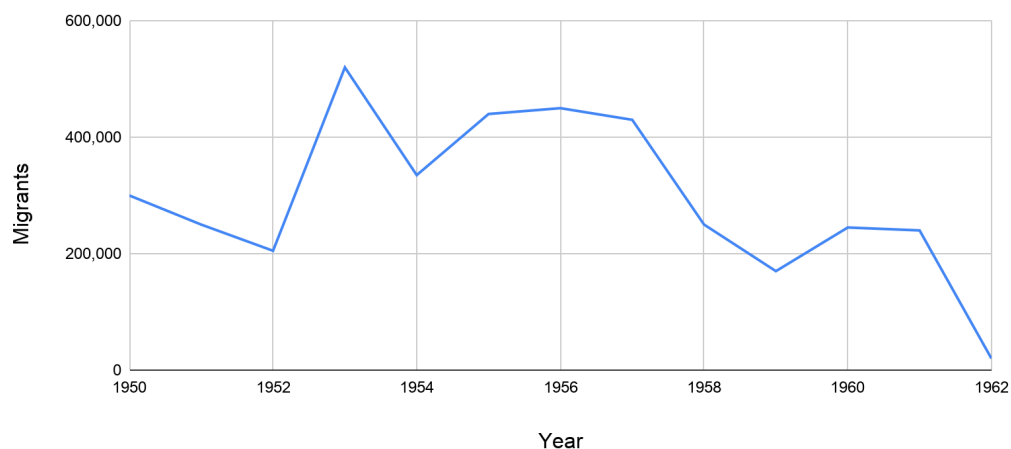
Our background chapter discusses Germany's past and recent immigration history which led to the formation of NGOs that support refugees, such as Über den Tellerrand. We then describe the challenges Über den Tellerrand is facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These topics are relevant to our project since they set the stage for understanding the reasoning behind Über den Tellerrand's mission, as well as provide context regarding the communication and network engagement obstacles presented by the pandemic.

2.1 German Migration after World War II

The post World War II climate led to increased migration into Germany, creating significant economic opportunities. In 1945, nearly 12 million Germans fled several central and eastern European countries, including former German provinces such as Silesia, Pomerania, and East Prussia that were annexed by Poland. This significant displacement of people was one of the largest mass migrations in the twentieth century (Falck, 2012). Due to the territorial changes, about eight million Germans settled in West Germany. About 20 percent of the population in the German partition zones after the war were German exiles from the east (Demshuk, 2012). The exiles not only experienced the loss of their homelands, but also loss of status and employment. In 1953, the Federal Expellee Law was introduced to provide economic aid to the exiles (Falck, 2012). With the help of the Marshall Plan (1949), West Germany's economy bounced back with the economic miracle known as the *Wirtschaftswunder* (Alt, 1962). Another source of migration to West Germany was East Germany; citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany for better economic opportunities and safety as seen in Figure 1 below (Triadafilopoulos et al., 2006).

Figure 1

Migration from East Germany to West Germany (Adapted from Münz and Ulrich, 1997)



Roughly 2.6 million Germans moved from East to West Germany before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. By this time, the economy was booming. However, West Germany severely lacked a large workforce, especially due to the halt in migration. Due to the small workforce, the Federal Republic of Germany initiated a foreign worker recruitment program (Horn, 2007).

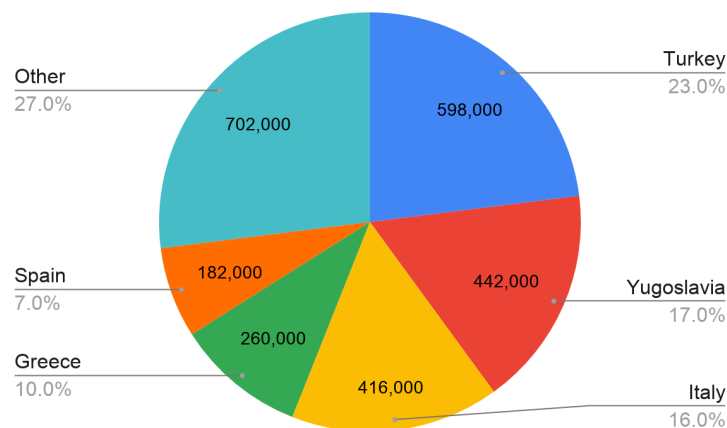
2.1.1 Guest Worker Recruitment and Multiculturalism

In the 1950s, West Germany signed guest worker recruitment agreements with several countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Portugal, and Yugoslavia (Oezcan, 2004). The agreements allowed guest workers to work in unskilled or semi-skilled positions in German industry, manufacturing, or agriculture (Vierra, 2018). The guest workers were permitted to work temporarily and were then expected to return to their home country. The agreement was organized to grow Germany’s workforce, while preventing permanent settlement. By the 1960s, over half a million guest workers settled in West Germany, comprising 1.2 percent of the total population. Throughout the 1960s, Germany started recruiting from additional countries such as Morocco and Tunisia. During this time, recruitment from Turkey increased, making Turks the largest ethnic group of guest workers by 1972 (Shonick, 2009).

While some guest workers returned home after finishing their work contract, increasing numbers of guest workers renewed their contracts and brought their families to live with them (Vierra, 2018). Due to the 1973 Oil Crisis, the Federal Republic of Germany’s government placed a ban on guest worker recruitment. At this point, however, four million guest workers had been recruited in West Germany with 2.6 million working in 1973, as seen in Figure 2 (Oezcan, 2004).

Figure 2

Breakdown of Guest Workers in West Germany in 1973 (Data from Oezcan, 2004)



While guest workers were meant to stay temporarily in West Germany, a large percentage renewed contracts, filed for residence permits, and planned to settle permanently. Since West

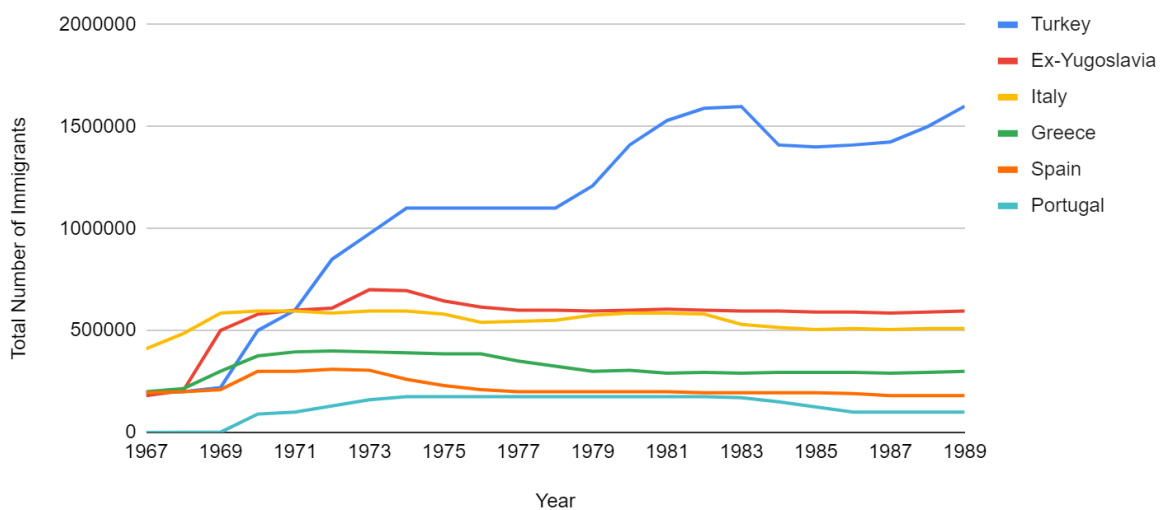
Germany never officially implemented a rotation policy in its recruitment agreements, which would have returned guest workers to their countries and brought new workers in, the migrants had no reason to leave if they did not wish to (Heiland, 2004). The number of migrants in West Germany throughout the 1980s remained fairly constant at 4.5 million. As time went on, however, migrants expanded their families, thus launching the second generation of a multicultural West Germany.

While the guest worker recruitment program brought millions of migrants into the country for economic purposes, the government did little to help guest workers and their families integrate (Vierra, 2018). With the conclusion of the guest worker program, foreigners and their families made up substantial ethnic minority populations in West Germany. However, Germany still did not see them as people of their own. The children born within the foreign families were not granted German citizenship. Moreover, Germans had no desire to incorporate the culture, language, or religion of Turks, the largest ethnic minority group in West Germany. The divide led Turks to create their own communities in Germany, allowing the community to feel at home and adopt their cultural identity (Mueller, 2007).

Although the German government officially halted the guest-worker era in 1973 due to an economic crisis, the number of migrants continued to increase steadily throughout the 1980s; families of the remaining workers arrived to be reunited with their loved ones, as seen in Figure 3. However, in the last few years of the 1980s, crises throughout Europe led to hundreds of thousands of people seeking asylum in Germany. The increase in asylum seekers has steadily progressed into the twenty-first century in Germany, as well as in Europe as a whole (Oezcan, 2004).

Figure 3

Total Number of Immigrants in Germany by Year (Adapted from Zimmermann, 2014)



2.2 The Post-2010 Refugee Crisis in Europe

In the past couple decades, conflicts around the world, in particular, the **Syrian civil war**, led to greater migration into Europe, which produced vastly different international responses. In this section, we compare the responses of various European Union (EU) nations to the increased migration numbers in the last few years, in order to then contextualize Germany's response through the scope of its continental neighbors.

Since 2011, over five million Syrians fled their homeland, initially seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan. It did not take long, however, before Syrian refugees sought shelter in Europe. Syrian refugees used three primary routes to arrive in Europe. The first consists of a land route, where Syrians traveled through Turkey to reach Greece and Bulgaria. Syrians also arrived directly by air travel, as well as by sea across the Mediterranean to Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Italy, Spain, and France. Figure 4 shows Syria's geographic proximity to other nations, with the entry routes into Europe on display (i.e. the Mediterranean Sea by water, and Turkey by land).

Figure 4

Migration Paths for Syria's Refugees



In 2015, 88,300 unaccompanied minors sought asylum in the EU (Hodes, 2017). While most came from Syria, a significant number of applications arrived from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Eritrea. In response to greater numbers of displaced people entering Europe, EU nations adopted different approaches to the situation. The responses of Turkey, Greece, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Hungary in the past decade may be compared in order to better understand the differences in European migration initiatives.

Greece and Turkey modeled a progressive approach to migration in the past decade. **Turkey**, a country with approximately 80 million inhabitants, adopted an open-door refugee policy at the start of the Syrian Civil War; the open-door policy was implemented to accept refugees from Syria, but also from Iraq and Afghanistan. Temporary protection status was provided to 3,451,383 Syrians residing in Turkey in 2017, showing that the nation has been liberal in its refugee policy (Hodes, 2017). In addition to legalizing the status of Syrian refugees, Turkey launched a large humanitarian response and implemented initiatives to enhance integration strategies (Hodes, 2017). For instance, Turkey granted refugee children the right to attend primary and secondary education free of charge. Turkey also offered the right to access medical care to all registered refugees (Hodes, 2017). Overall, Turkey has been hospitable towards refugees in recent years.

Greece also applied a progressive migrant policy in the last couple decades, with 804,565 immigrants and refugees arriving in 2015 (Hodes, 2017). In response to increased migrant discrimination in Greece, the government accelerated efforts to pass legislation to address issues regarding migration and racism in recent years. Greece also implemented all EU regulations, as well as all resolutions recommended by the United Nations that address refugee and migration flow (Hodes, 2017). Moreover, like Turkey, Greece ensured the preservation of all human rights for the refugee population in its land; the rights include social welfare, education, and healthcare. Hence, Greece and Turkey led similar progressive refugee integration responses to the crisis of the past decade.

In contrast to nations like Greece and Turkey, the **United Kingdom (UK)** showcased a more conservative approach. In 2015, the UK received 631,500 immigrants; asylum seekers accounted for just five percent of this figure (Hodes, 2017). Asylum seekers mostly came from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, and Sudan. Hence, far fewer refugees sought to enter the UK as compared to nations such as Turkey and Greece. While the geographic proximity of Turkey and Greece to Syria and other conflict-ridden nations contributed to less asylum seekers in the UK, UK policy increasingly restricted the reception of immigrants and asylum seekers. Hence, throughout 2015, the peak year of the European refugee crisis, the UK did not experience a significant increase of asylum seekers as compared to other EU nations (Hodes, 2017).

While the UK was more conservative in its refugee policy than Greece and Turkey, it has not been as restrictive as **Hungary**, whose prime minister called migration a “poison” in 2016 (Gall, 2016). As of 2016, Hungary, a country of 10 million people, accepted only 1,294 asylum seekers. Hungary also refused to participate in a binding agreement amongst EU nations that requires member states to equitably distribute asylum seekers across Europe (Gall, 2016).

Many EU nations displayed relatively constant responses to the refugee crisis over the last decade, with some members acting either more progressively or restrictively to various degrees. However, certain nations showed transitions in their policy. **Norway**, for instance, began with a more progressive approach to the refugee crisis but eventually shifted towards becoming more restrictive. Research from 2015 showed that out of Norway’s entire refugee population, Eritreans were most likely to be allowed to remain, with a 90 percent rate of

successful application processing (Hodes, 2017). By contrast, 70 percent of Syrians were allowed to remain, while only eight percent of Iraqis were granted asylum. Other applications from countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, and Bangladesh were vastly unsuccessful in their appeal for asylum in Norway (Hodes, 2017). The number of asylum seekers arriving in Norway reduced drastically in 2016 as compared to 2015, after a parliament decision to tighten asylum policy and implement stricter border checks was enacted, highlighting the nation's shift towards a less progressive approach to the refugee crisis (Hodes, 2017). Norway also reduced the benefits for people living in reception centers, produced fewer temporary residence permits, as well as limited family reunification and family establishment rights for refugees. Hence, while Norway initially mirrored the reaction of nations such as Greece and Turkey to the refugee crisis, the country eventually transitioned its migrant policy to reflect more restrictive countries like the UK and Hungary.

Evaluating these responses to the refugee crisis of the past decade reveals that there have been significant differences in the nationwide reactions. Nations such as Turkey and Greece have welcomed the arrival of many migrants and refugees and granted them many rights and benefits. On the other hand, nations such as the United Kingdom, and to a much greater extent Hungary, have showcased more restrictive approaches. Moreover, EU members such as Norway showed drastic shifts in its refugee policy over the past decade. Clearly, there has been variation in how EU members have approached the refugee crisis, with some blatantly refusing to participate in binding EU agreements altogether. Hence, the reaction of EU nations in light of the recent refugee crisis ranges from open and hospitable to restrictive and cautious; evaluating Germany's response to the refugee crisis will give an understanding of where it lies in comparison to other EU nations.

2.3 Welcoming Refugees in Germany

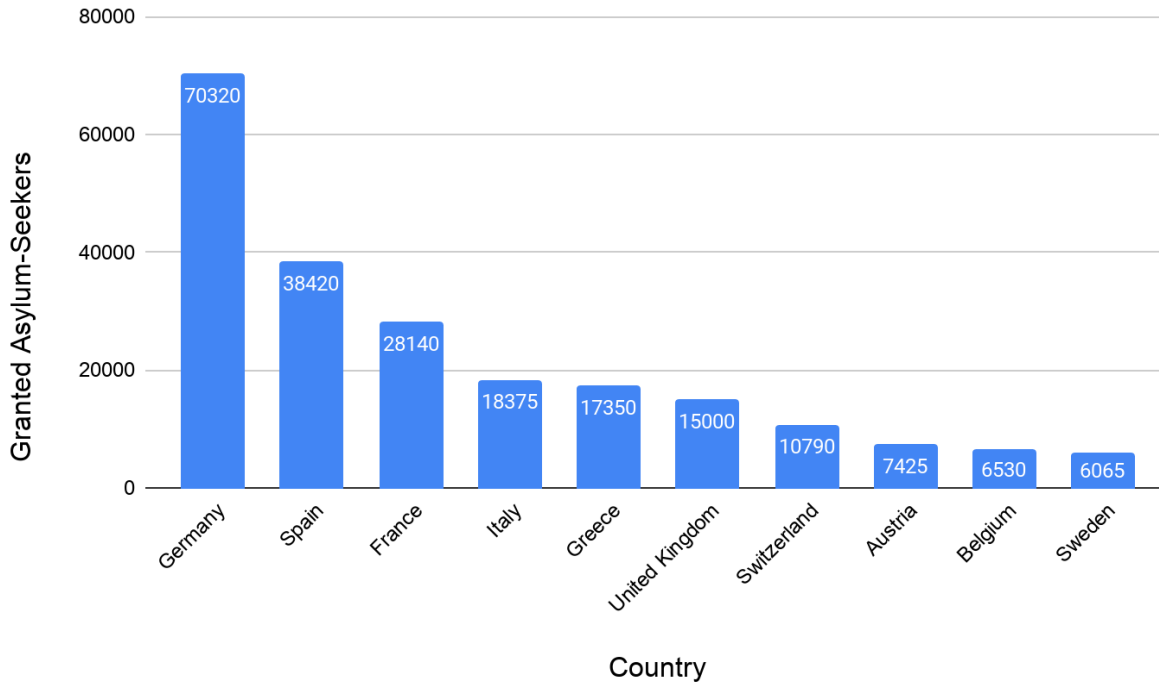
Germany has developed a more progressive stance toward accepting refugees due to the political, economic, and social opportunities accepting refugees creates for Germany in the long term. Germany adopted a liberal stance toward refugees, leading to acceptance of close to 1.4 million refugees between 2015 to 2017 (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016). Germany initiated the refugee integration program by creating a streamlined system for processing and integrating refugees into German culture. Legislation such as the Asylum Act and Residence Act aided in offering settlements to refugees throughout Germany (Hellman et al., 2020). Overall, Germany has created a system ready to admit refugees, offer language courses, and provide housing, education, and economic opportunities.

The 2015 European refugee crisis prompted Germany to open its borders and accept refugees. During the crisis, German citizens rallied to handle the humanitarian crisis, with chancellor Angela Merkel spreading the message of "*Wir schaffen das*" or "We can do this!" which sought to instill a sense of German national pride. Germany launched an open-door policy, allowing refugees entering Germany to claim asylum, as shown in Figure 5. Many neighboring European countries feared that Germany's policy would incentivize more refugees to enter

Europe and overwhelm its (i.e. neighboring European countries to Germany) asylum systems and cause socio-economic issues.

Figure 5

Number of Refugees Accepted by Different European Countries by the End of 2017 (Eurostat, 2019)

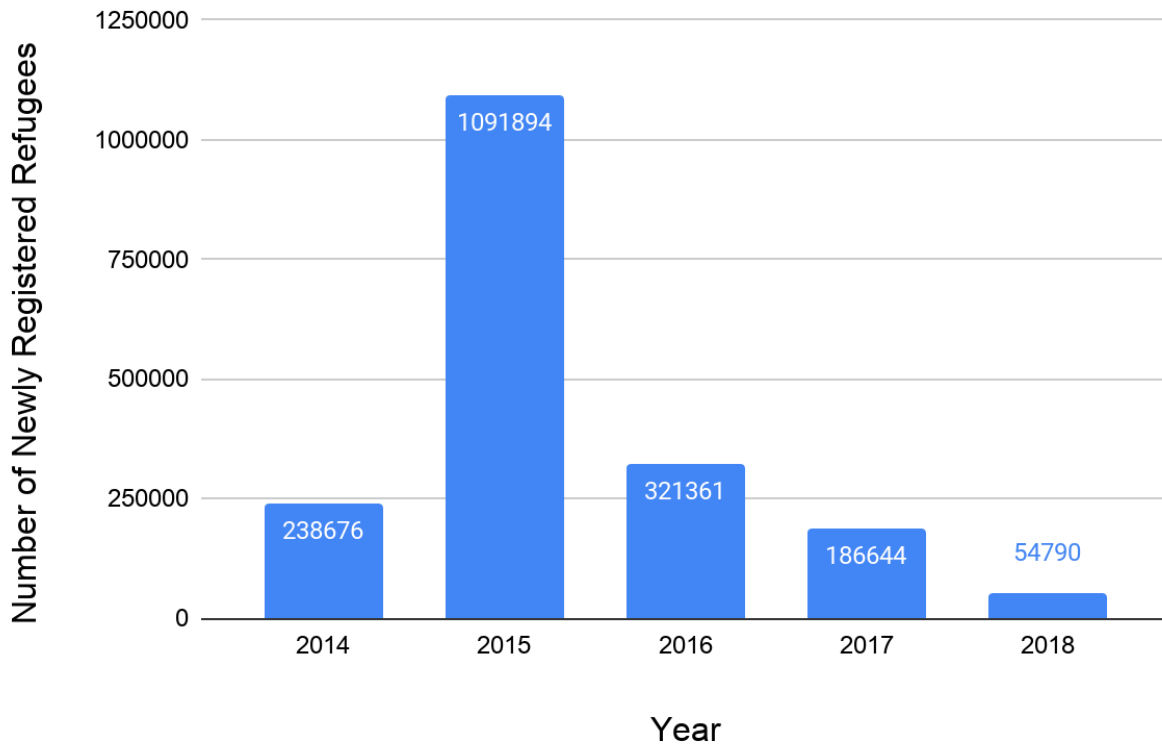


Refugees also considered Germany a desirable destination for its history of receiving migrants. The connection traces back to the past thirty years where Germany received more than thirty percent of all asylum applications in Europe (Duffin, 2019). The country was seen as safe and prosperous, with the largest economy in Europe (Duffin, 2019). Thus, in 2015, Germany became an obvious destination for refugees; the country accepted 890,000 refugees and received 467,649 formal applications for asylum (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016). In addition, large diasporic networks formed from past foreign worker treaties; these networks offered new refugees a sense of community when they arrived, as they would be surrounded by people with similar cultures to aid in integration.

Another factor that encouraged migration into Germany was the nation's liberal asylum policy that differed from EU practices. By European law, asylum seekers can only apply for asylum in the first European country they arrive in; they also risk deportation if they try to apply to another state. The German government still refrained from deporting refugees and opted to process the asylum applications, further highlighting Germany's liberal approach to immigration. Figure 6 below shows the amount of newly registered displaced people in Germany between 2014 and 2018.

Figure 6

Newly Registered Refugees in Germany from 2014 to 2018 (Koptuyug, 2020)



Between 2014 and 2018, the number of newly registered refugees totaled 1,893,365 refugees. In addition to political impacts, the large number of forcibly displaced people migrating into Germany impacted the nation economically and socially.

2.3.1 Economic Impacts of German Immigration Policies

One of the driving factors for Germany's refugee policy was the economic boost refugees offered the growing German economy. The Berlin Center estimated the working age population in Germany would shrink by six million by 2030 (Welt, 2016). Refugees would fill the shrinking workforce, grow the German population, and boost the economy. The arrival of refugees increased the German population by one percent, marking the largest population increase in the German Republic in over 20 years. The head of the DIW economic institute stated that refugees filled more than two thirds of almost 1.5 million new jobs created in the German economy. Therefore, refugees served as an economic boost for the German workforce, and represented a future investment with the potential of cementing Germany's place as an economic powerhouse in Europe.

Integrating refugees in the German workforce created new opportunities and economic growth for the country. According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), Germany placed fourth out of thirty-eight countries in a ranking that related to labor market mobility

(Koca, 2019). As of 2020, around thirty-five percent of refugees between the ages of fifteen and sixty were in a position of employment in Germany, a figure which far exceeded expectations (Casey, 2020). Although fear has been expressed in some EU countries regarding rising unemployment due to the arrival of displaced people, research indicated that refugees contributed to job creation in countries such as Germany. Moreover, in a time where Germany experienced a severe shortage in labor, the incoming refugees helped fill nearly 1.4 million positions that were left vacant (Casey, 2020).

Nevertheless, large-scale refugee acceptance and integration has incurred a significant financial expense for the German Republic. In 2015, Germany spent \$5.76 billion on social welfare expenses, a 169 percent increase from the previous year. In 2016, the German government spent 21.7 billion euros on refugee-related expenses (Welt, 2016). Although it is difficult to calculate precise refugee support costs in each country, Germany spent approximately 0.5 percent of its gross domestic product on refugees in 2015 (Koca, 2019). With these increased expenditures, it was expected that the German economy and the price for integration would reach a breakeven point in the coming years. Following that point, the increased employment and consumption by refugees would lead to future economic growth in hopes it would lead to a one percent German GDP growth by 2025 (German Institute of Economic Research, 2015). Increased government demand for food, housing, and other services leads to increased profit in the private sector. The German government is focused on a long-term approach as shown in a 2015 International Monetary Fund report stating the integration of refugees into Germany would not only counter the decline of its working population, but also lead to an increase in consumption and investment in the German economy (Duffin, 2019).

2.3.2 Social Impacts of German Immigration Policies

From a social standpoint, the refugee integration process includes learning the host country's language, accessing education, employment and healthcare, family reunion, social assistance, recognition of skills and qualifications, and participation in the social and cultural life of communities in the host countries (Koca, 2019). As refugees entered Germany, the German government spread the incoming refugees among the sixteen federal states, through the "Königstein" quota system, which distributes refugees according to each state's capacity to accept them (Koca, 2019). The quota system is based on each state's tax revenue as well as total population. Berlin, a city-state, accepted the most refugees per square kilometer out of all German states. According to the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the average time for the refugee application process in 2018 was eight months, while the average time for a final decision was 16.8 months (AIDA, 2020).

In a time when millions were forcibly displaced from their countries, Germany offered opportunities for safety and integration. Refugees left places such as Syria and Afghanistan due to civil unrest and war and were attracted to Germany for its liberal and open asylum policy. Germany also viewed refugees as long-term boosts to its economy and workforce. Moreover, the new generation of refugee workers would be trained and educated in Germany to inherit the fast-growing economy.

2.4 Opposition to Refugees in Germany and Rise of NGOs

Germany's open border policy generated massive opposition. Alongside citizen backlash, the asylum system designed by Germany failed in various administrative policies surrounding integration when refugees began entering the country. The refugee crisis also became a polarizing issue in the German political climate; the right-wing political party of Germany, the *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)*, stood against liberal refugee policies, and gained significant momentum. The shortcomings of Germany's asylum system, as well as significant opposition, triggered the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on integrating, educating, and helping refugees settle into Germany. The newly formed refugee-focused NGOs created a system focused on teaching refugees German and helping them find jobs, education, and housing.

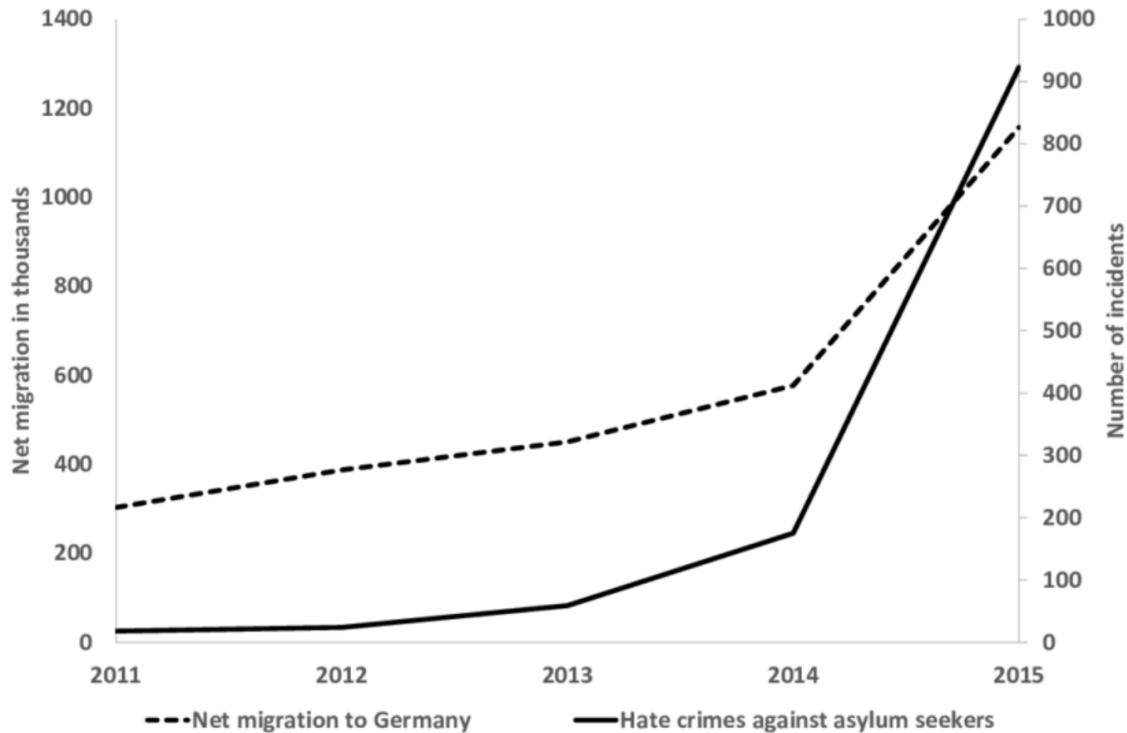
2.4.1 Opposition and Shortcomings of Germany's Policies

The integration of refugees into Germany resulted in a sometimes polarized culture. Since 2015, Germany received about 1.6 million asylum applications (German Federal Office for Migration, 2016). The increase in applications resulted in the so-called 'welcome culture,' (*Willkommenskultur*), a sense of Germans offering the helping hand needed. Germany believed it was prepared for the challenge. As refugees arrived, however, there was poor execution in accommodating the sheer number of refugees entering the country (Trines, 2019). Administrative errors in the asylum system as well as refugee controversies revealed flaws in Germany's preparedness to the refugee crisis, which fueled opposition.

The large number of refugees entering Germany led to the failure of the German refugee processing and integration system (Hellman et al., 2020). The government kept minimal information about the migrants entering the country and admitted to losing track of close to 130,000 refugees who failed to arrive at their settlement location (Hellman et al., 2020). The refugee processing system failed for multiple reasons; first, the sheer volume of refugees entering Germany made it difficult to properly distribute resources needed to aid in their settlement and integration. The second issue was the lack of preparedness; although Germany was willing to accept more refugees, its integration and services system was not equipped to handle their arrival. The integration of more refugees also generated massive opposition against refugees. Increased opposition led to a spike in violent hate crimes on the refugee population. The federal criminal police office counted more than 1,000 violent attacks on buildings and services aiding asylum seekers in 2015, shown in Figure 7 below (Benedikter et al., 2016).

Figure 7

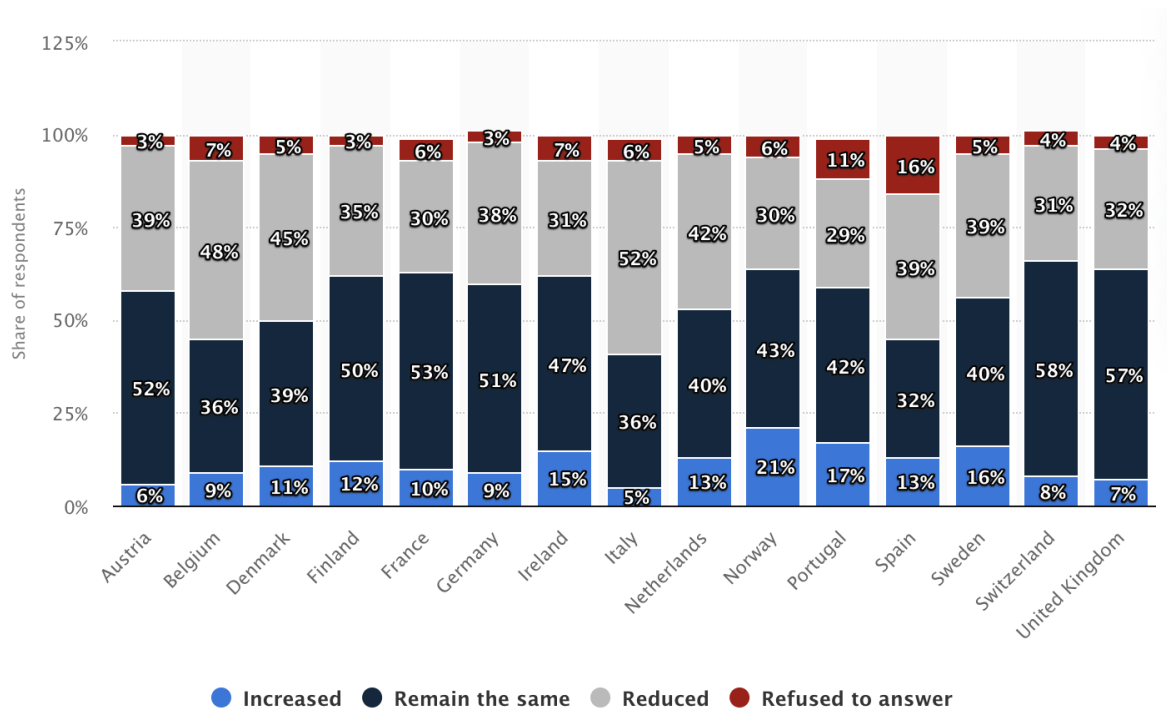
Correlation between Rise of Hate Crimes with Influx in Refugees (Entorf & Lange, 2019)



Opposition efforts against refugees in Germany mounted when the AfD picked up steam in 2015. It voiced the German population's cries against the acceptance and integration of refugees into a system which they believed was run by elite lawmakers who never represented the German people (Hellman et al., 2020). A 2017 poll from the Pew Research center showed an increase in public opinion in select EU countries asking for the level of immigration to be changed. 38 percent of German respondents called for a reduction in the number of refugees entering the country, highlighting Germans' changing views on migrants and refugees in Europe, which can be seen in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

Public Opinion on the Immigration Level in Select European Countries (Duffin, 2019)



The differing opinions of Germans alongside the failure with processing and integrating refugees provided the platform for right-wing parties to surge in popularity in the German political system. A 2016 election resulted in the AfD gaining 24.6 percent of votes, winning the party seats in the East and West German parliaments. In addition, the AfD became the second strongest political party in Germany (Benedikter et al., 2016). Its strong rhetoric against migration and the integration of refugees was their driving force to power, but there was also the fear that their rhetoric mirrored messages of the Nazi party (Benedikter et al., 2016). Research suggests that a vast majority of right-wing party supporters were from the former East Germany and that former East German residents were more opposed to refugees and had their own movements, such as the “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the occident” (Hellman et al., 2020). The Eastern Germans viewed refugees as competition for resources and economic opportunities, leading to the rise of hate crimes such as arson and physical assault in refugee centers (Hellman et al., 2020). The fears mainly led to the majority of refugees being housed in the former West Germany since they were more open and accepting. The increased ties to hate crimes and rise of new political parties due to the acceptance of refugees developed a culture of polarization and prompted policy change.

2.4.2 Rise of NGOs and German “Welcome Culture”

As the arrival of refugees overwhelmed the German immigration system, state and local officials began turning to NGOs for assistance regarding integration and housing efforts. NGOs

took over different branches of integration including education, jobs, housing, and culture in order to assist refugees (Zimmerman et al., 2020).

Various local officials connected NGOs and refugees in their area. NGOs offered housing assistance and integration practices such as language preparation especially for parents and children. The additional aid provided by NGOs supported the welcome culture Germany fosters (Kyuchukov, 2017). The state of emergency regarding the refugee crisis brought NGOs and UNICEF alongside the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs to draft the minimum standards for the protection of refugees and migrants. The refugee protection proposal provided a systematic approach to integrating refugees into German society with German language classes, school enrollment, and job searching assistance. The proposal also aimed to provide NGOs an avenue to safely house and protect refugees due to the increase in hate crimes (Zimmerman et al., 2020). Organizations such as Be an Angel, Media Residents, Start with a Friend, and Über den Tellerrand offered refugees safe spaces to integrate into German culture. The new NGOs also offered opportunities to learn German, understand their local community, make friends, and develop skills to live comfortably and navigate the German way of life. Organizations also emerged to give refugees the skill sets to settle into Germany while still preserving their cultural identity. The safe spaces they offered were places for sharing their story and voice with German participants while engaging in different recreational activities. Another goal was to remove prejudices and give refugees a voice to showcase who they are around other Germans, and, in turn, bridge various groups, fostering connection and integration between different communities.

NGOs provided services with funding assistance from federal and state governments. The increased volunteerism from the German people increased the connection between refugees and the local community. This “welcome culture” provided safe avenues for communication and connection between two culturally different people, contributing to the effect of a multicultural Germany.

2.5 The Story of Über den Tellerrand

Über den Tellerrand, the German expression for “beyond the edge of the plate”, is an NGO centered around creating an open and tolerant society. Über den Tellerrand’s origin story began in 2012 after the suicide of Muhammed Rahsapar, an Iranian refugee located at a refugee camp in Würzburg. Other refugees at the Würzburg camp set off to Berlin in a protest march against the isolation and discriminative laws the German government was imposing on them. Along the 600km route, the march visited other refugee camps and invited them to join their protest (Refugee Movement, 2015). After arriving in Berlin while gaining support along the journey, refugees set up a protest camp at Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg. It was here at Oranienplatz where German citizens engaged with refugees through cooking and sharing meals together. Über den Tellerrand formed shortly after, giving refugees a place to cook meals, share stories, and connect with civilians in ways that were previously not possible.

Figure 9

Über den Tellerrand Satellite Locations



Using the recipes shared from cooking at Oranienplatz, Über den Tellerrand published *Eine Prise Heimat (A Pinch of Home)* in 2016 featuring traditional recipes and personal refugee stories (Über den Tellerrand, 2021). Since its founding, Über den Tellerrand has become an international organization with 40 locations around the world as seen in Figure 9 (Über den Tellerrand, 2021). Each location is called a satellite and they all share the same mission: to bring civilians and refugees together to break down mutual prejudices, as well as create a more open-minded, respectful, and inclusive society. Activities today at the various satellites are not limited to cooking. Participants can garden, bee-keep, make music, dance, and study language in a safe and open atmosphere (Appendix A). The activities are attended by both German citizens and refugees, enhancing the connection between people of different origin. In 2019, the Berlin satellite location offered 55 intercultural cooking courses led by Syrian and Afghan cooks (Über den Tellerrand, 2021). Participants are taught how to prepare a traditional three-course menu followed by a group meal involving all participants. The success of integration techniques like cooking together are limited when restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic leave Über den Tellerrand unable to operate as normal.

2.5.1 Impacts of COVID-19 on Über den Tellerrand

With the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person events at Über den Tellerrand have been shut-down. In-person events have been a big part of Über den Tellerrand's mission and its recipe for integration and dialogue. The restriction of gatherings has caused Über den Tellerrand to implement online approaches to continue its mission. Like many businesses and organizations during the pandemic, Über den Tellerrand has relied on Zoom to host events. For example, Über den Tellerrand tried online yoga for children but found it was not attracting a sufficient number of participants (Aksu et al., 2021). They also adapted elements of in-person events, such as cooking courses, into online formats. Since Über den Tellerrand transitioned online, event attendance levels are lower than they were a year ago. With the pause on in-person events, Über den Tellerrand has used online platforms to connect with members, but many volunteers and participants do not feel motivated to join a Zoom event after a full day of Zoom work (Aksu et al., 2021). Volunteers have day jobs, most often online, which discourages them to volunteer their time for another online activity. The decrease in volunteerism has prevented satellites from hosting a variety of events that could potentially draw more participants. In addition to events shifting online, Über den Tellerrand has relied more heavily on online communication platforms such as Slack, WhatsApp, and social media to connect its community. The increased use of online platforms to connect the entire Über den Tellerrand network has introduced many challenges, however, creating a potential for enhancing the organization's communication and network engagement strategies.

NGOs like Über den Tellerrand were not equipped to handle all interactions with staff, volunteers, and participants digitally; NGOs always discussed looking into enhancing its online presence, but never had the pressing need to do so until the pandemic hit (Bharania, 2020). To manage interactions, Über den Tellerrand has relied on social media platforms to spread information on events and programs it offers, but not all satellites have the resources to utilize the platforms effectively. For this reason, Über den Tellerrand needs a new communication framework to better utilize online tools and resources to communicate internally in order to continue connecting people and grow as a network.

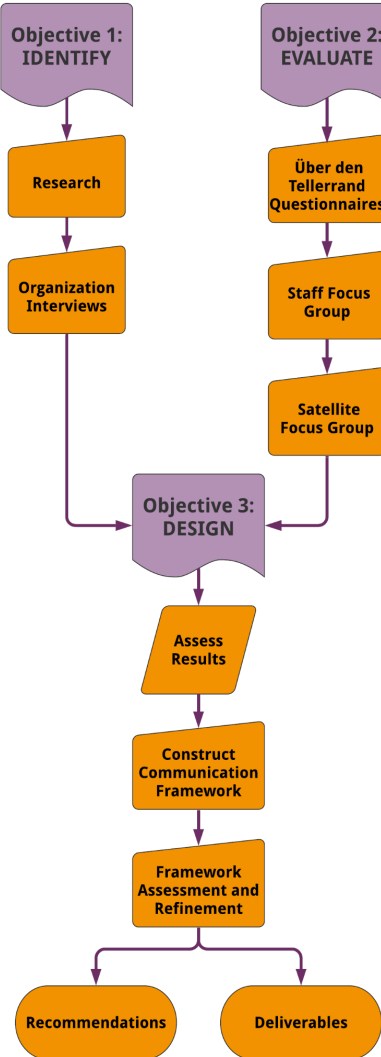
3.0 Methods

This project sought to enhance Über den Tellerrand’s internal communication and engagement techniques during the COVID-19 pandemic. We identified three objectives:

- 1. IDENTIFY: Learn best practices in network communication within other organizations similar to Über den Tellerrand.
- 2. EVALUATE: Assess the current status of the organization and how it has adapted to the pandemic.
- 3. DESIGN: Create a strategy for communication, networking, and community engagement for Über den Tellerrand.

Figure 10

Diagram of Project Methodology



Each objective was split into various tasks, seen in Figure 10, which combined to achieve the larger purpose behind our project: developing better communication strategies to promote networking and community engagement. To complete the objectives, we used a mixed methods approach that included online interviews, focus groups, and survey analysis. Our data collection methods allowed our team to gather detailed information on the communication practices at other organizations, as well as Über den Tellerrand's current practices. Our project used the responses to identify areas where Über den Tellerrand can enhance its communication to further achieve its mission.

3.1 Identifying Best Communication Practices

Our first objective was to learn about the communication methods that other organizations similar to Über den Tellerrand use to maintain connection with staff, volunteers, participants, and other locations within their networks. In this section, we discuss how we chose the organizations we interviewed, what we expected to learn from the interviews, and how we analyzed the responses.

3.1.1 Researching Communication Platforms and Strategies

Before conducting interviews, our team wanted to learn how organizations have structured their communication methods; we sought to understand the most common online platforms, as well as what types of strategies they have employed, particularly regarding written communication guidelines.

We researched commonly used platforms during the pandemic such as **Slack**, a messaging platform for businesses and organizations; **WhatsApp**, an instant messaging and video chat platform; **Discord**, an instant messaging and video chat platform; **Zoom**, a video chat platform; **Trello**, a list-making and planning tool; and **Miro**, a digital whiteboard collaboration tool to compare their features and learn how other organizations are using them to improve communication within their network.

In regards to written communication guidelines, we learned that many business and non-profit organizations use standard operating procedures (SOPs) that outline how to conduct communication with others within their network. These step-by-step instructions detail how to carry out frequent tasks as well as which platforms are used to contact staff, volunteers, and participants (Henshall, 2020). We also explored other written guidelines that divide an organization's network into internal and external communication. Internal communication refers to the processes used to effectively communicate between employees and other locations of an organization whereas external communication refers to the exchange of information between staff and outside participants, volunteers, and the public (Prosper Strategies, 2020). Internal and external communication build off each other and are important for an organization's success, especially during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Establishing clear lines of communication for reaching staff, volunteers, and participants is crucial to ensure everyone is on the same page (Prosper Strategies, 2020). Overall, communication guidelines aid in defining

internal and external communication within an organization alongside minimizing miscommunication and ensuring employees can effectively relay information to others in the network.

3.1.2 Interviewing Related Organizations

Our team planned to learn how other organizations adapted their communication methods over the course of the pandemic and how effective the methods are. We aimed to learn which online platforms they are utilizing to communicate between staff, participants, volunteers, and other locations within their network. Moreover, we wanted to learn if the organizations have protocols to receive and analyze feedback regarding how successful their communication is. We also intended to learn if they have employed SOPs or other communication guidelines to provide clarity in communication between staff, volunteers, participants, and others throughout their network. To gather information, we reached out to organizations centered around the different components of Über den Tellerrand events such as cooking, language, and refugee resources and advocacy. Our team reached out to cooking organizations such as **Sur La Table** and **Cuiline**, language organizations such as the **Goethe-Institut** in Boston, and refugee-based NGOs such as **Angels-Net Foundation (Angels-Net)**, **African Community Education (ACE)**, **Hello USA**, **Refugees International**, **Islamic Relief USA**, **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society**, **Refugee Council USA**, **Media Residences**, **Be an Angel**, and **Start with a Friend**. We chose to narrow our selections down to organizations with similar missions so that the reasoning behind methods of communication could be easily applied to Über den Tellerrand.

We successfully scheduled interviews with **Angels-Net, the Goethe-Institut, and ACE**. Before the pandemic, organizations such as Über den Tellerrand relied on meeting and communicating in person, but had to quickly adapt to facilitating communication and networking using strictly online methods, such as Zoom and social media platforms. The abrupt transition led to several technological challenges and a decrease in participation from all groups in organization networks. In these interviews, our team aimed to understand what challenges the organizations experienced, how those challenges impacted their communication with staff, volunteers, and participants, what online methods they tested out, if they currently use SOPs or other communication guidelines, and if they have feedback mechanisms to determine if the communication methods are effective.

Our team conducted **semi-structured interviews** centered around communication practices through Zoom calls with staff from each organization. Two members from our team were present at each interview; one member led the interview and the other member recorded the meeting and took notes. Interviewing was chosen as a method since it allowed for the interviewee to give additional insight into the detail about our questions, whereas a survey would be limited in options as well as number of responses. The interviews also provided a more personal connection when discussing communication topics. To gain insight on the process that organizations underwent to transition to online methods of operation and communication, our team prepared a set of interview questions. We intended to gain a **comprehensive view of the online platforms** they use by asking various questions (Appendix B) about communication

practices. Through these questions, our team developed a deeper understanding of which methods have worked and not worked for the organizations, if and how they received and documented feedback, and what they would do differently to improve in the future.

3.1.3 Analyzing the Interviews

To analyze the responses we gathered from the interviews, we used an **inductive qualitative analysis method** that involved identifying common themes throughout the data. We chose an inductive analysis method because it does not emphasize the context of the responses, but rather allowed us to focus on the content of the responses. An inductive approach to interpreting the data was more suitable to accomplish our objective rather than a deductive approach because we did not have a current framework to base the responses on; our team used these interviews to gain a new understanding so that we could apply the methods of other organizations to Über den Tellerrand's current communication strategies.

After conducting our interviews, the responses from each interview were transferred into Google docs. Our team designated two coders, not present at the interview, to individually analyze the responses for each interview. Each coder read through the document and highlighted sections of the responses, and narrowed down common themes based on the sections. After both coders determined their themes, they produced a table with quotes from the interview outlining key points that demonstrate each theme; the two team members who were present at the interview reviewed this document as well as the initial responses together. Our team developed this coding procedure to allow for individual interpretation of the responses. Once our team completed all interviews and coding, all themes identified were compared with each other to list common themes from all interviews. Overall, the interviews provided our team with key information, used to craft our communication framework as well as our recommendations.

3.2 Evaluating Über den Tellerrand's Transition to the Pandemic

Our second objective was to understand how Über den Tellerrand adapted to the pandemic from communication and network engagement standpoints. In this section, we discuss what we intended to learn through our second objective, as well as why we chose certain methods.

Über den Tellerrand expressed that research had not been conducted to determine why certain online activities had been more successful than others; we sought to conduct the research ourselves to notice trends regarding the organization's online activities and use the information to form our recommendations and deliverables. Moreover, we looked to understand the ways people learned about Über den Tellerrand and the year they learned about the organization. We also aimed to learn about **internal communication procedures** employed by Über den Tellerrand, relating to communication between staff, volunteers, participants, and satellites. Learning about communication procedures included understanding standard communication methods as well as the online platforms used by the organization.

3.2.1 Analyzing Über den Tellerrand's Survey Data

We began by analyzing raw data collected by Über den Tellerrand surveys. The first set of data came from a survey called “**2019 Satellite Survey**,” a yearly feedback survey Über den Tellerrand sent to all satellites. The “2019 Satellite Survey” had 20 responses. We received data from the same yearly feedback survey for the following year as well, called “**2020 Satellite Survey**,” which had 31 responses. Lastly, we received data from a survey Über den Tellerrand sent to participants, called “**Five Years on Integration**,” which included 56 responses. The data from the three surveys were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. To organize the results, we created a Google Sheet for each set of survey data. Each sheet was organized into various tabs, such that the raw data was separated from visualized data. The quantitative results were visualized by creating graphs and charts to more easily identify trends.

Since we did not create the surveys Über den Tellerrand sent to us, we identified the relevant questions that would be helpful for evaluating the organization's transition to the pandemic. Many of the questions in the yearly feedback surveys were used in both the 2019 and 2020 editions, so we compared the data side by side to better understand the effects of COVID-19 on Über den Tellerrand. Moreover, the “2020 Satellite Survey” included additional questions that were not present in the 2019 version, which provided us new information regarding the impact of COVID-19. The “Five Years on Integration” gave us a unique perspective since it only included responses from event participants at Über den Tellerrand before the pandemic. Most of the questions in all three surveys related to events at Über den Tellerrand. Analyzing the responses helped us understand how event participation was impacted, identify trends related to event structure and popularity, identify satellite engagement trends, as well as determine other themes. Overall, the data from the three surveys provided to us by Über den Tellerrand helped us develop recommendations for the organization going forward, with a focus on satellite engagement and event participation.

3.2.2 Administering our Own Questionnaire to Über den Tellerrand Members

In addition to using survey data directly from Über den Tellerrand, we **created our own questionnaire** (Appendix C). We compared data from our questionnaire with the results from the three other surveys in order to strengthen our understanding of the organization's transition to the pandemic. Our questionnaire was created in English as well as translated into Arabic by team member Tony Eid, and into German by Über den Tellerrand. Each translation of the questionnaire was made into a Google Form and distributed to volunteers and participants of Über den Tellerrand. We designed the questionnaire for an estimated completion time of five to ten minutes. We anticipated that a short questionnaire would generate more responses. We sent the questionnaire to participants via Über den Tellerrand's Facebook group, which produced 29 responses. In order to simplify our data analysis, we compiled all of the responses into one Google Sheet with five tabs. The first tab was for the English responses; the second was for the Arabic responses; the third was for the German responses; the fourth compiled all the results once they were translated to English; and the fifth tab included the table ranking data from

questions 14 through 16. The responses to questions 14 through 16 gave us an understanding of the most popular events currently held by Über den Tellerrand, the most popular event ideas we brainstormed, as well as the most pressing barriers preventing more participation in online events.

We included questions regarding when and how participants and volunteers heard about Über den Tellerrand, which gave us a sense of the primary mechanism used to reach new people. We also included multiple choice questions that asked how many and what type of events they attended since the start of the pandemic. In addition to multiple choice questions, we included a set of table-ranking questions, such that participants could rank their preferences or level of agreement to a statement. Diversifying the formatting of the questions made the questionnaire more engaging while giving our team more data to analyze. We also added short-answer questions at the very end of the questionnaire to see if we could identify meaningful suggestions regarding Über den Tellerrand's online communication and network engagement. The quantitative data from our questionnaire was visualized with graphs and compared to the data from Über den Tellerand's three surveys to identify trends more easily. The qualitative data from our questionnaire was analyzed in an inductive approach and also compared to the qualitative results from the other surveys. Overall, we used the responses from our own questionnaire to develop a more robust understanding of Über den Tellerrand's transition to the pandemic. With a more enhanced understanding, we were able to develop and justify our recommendations regarding network engagement and event participation.

3.2.3 Convening the Berlin Staff Focus Group

We also used a **focus group** with staff from the Berlin satellite to collect information. We organized our prompts into three main categories: introductory questions, exploration questions, and exit questions (Appendix D). The questions were geared to give us reflections on **pre-COVID-19** as well as **post-COVID-19** experiences in Über den Tellerrand. We also asked specific questions regarding the online platforms they use. Furthermore, we used the Berlin staff focus group to give us more of a philosophical understanding of the nature of communication in Über den Tellerrand. More particularly, we asked why it is important for satellites to be in touch in the first place. Lastly, the focus group helped us better understand the main issues Über den Tellerand has faced in regard to communication and networking since the start of the pandemic. Overall, the staff focus group helped us identify whether we should focus more on refining Über den Tellerrand's current communication structure or identify new platforms and operation procedures altogether.

The staff focus group was conducted over Zoom with six staff members from the Berlin site. We recorded the Zoom meeting after receiving permission and generated a transcript. We reviewed the transcript in an inductive coding procedure by pulling out the most relevant themes from the responses and grouping quotes to corresponding themes. We also rewatched the recording to correct quotes since the auto-transcript was not precise in certain instances. Using the information gained from our staff focus group, we became more knowledgeable on the main

issues that Über den Tellerrand faced regarding online communication.

3.2.4 Convening the Satellite Focus Group

The purpose of the satellite focus group was to learn about staff experiences during the pandemic across various satellites to improve our understanding of engagement and communication across the network. The eight largest Über den Tellerrand satellites were contacted for the focus group, with hopes of recruiting three to four satellites. Our focus group consisted of representatives from the **Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt, Freiburg, and Hamburg** locations where we asked questions regarding communication, feedback, and online platforms (Appendix E). Satellite representatives discussed their thoughts about the general communication structure within the Über den Tellerrand network between their headquarters in Berlin and other satellites. The satellite focus group opened the door to analyzing ways satellites can grow their networks and foster cross-satellite community building. Using a top-down approach, we learned how information is relayed from the communication group in Berlin to the various satellites in the organization. We also used an inductive analysis approach to evaluate the satellite focus group responses.

The focus group provided knowledge on how various satellites operated before and after the pandemic. More particularly, we gained valuable insight on changes in event trends, network engagement across satellites, and unique communication strategies employed by various satellites.

3.3 Designing a Strategy for Communication, Networking and Community Engagement

We aimed to develop a communication framework with the goal of improving online networking and engagement using the results from our interviews with other organizations, as well as our focus groups with Über den Tellerrand staff members.

3.3.1 Assessing the Results

After analyzing the results from the interviews and focus groups, we compared key themes and communication practices across organizations. We then used the comparisons to identify areas of improvement regarding communication practices within Über den Tellerrand. Our analysis process helped us understand diverse communication structures to discover the best way to help Über den Tellerrand improve communication and engagement within the network during and after the pandemic.

3.3.2 Constructing Communication Guidelines

Following the assessment of best practices and network communication, we determined that communication guidelines would provide an effective path in enhancing communication and network engagement for Über den Tellerrand. Communication guidelines are written guidelines designed to aid in the completion of tasks with the goal of increasing efficiency (Siegfried,

2017). We aimed to streamline the flow of communication among staff to volunteers and participants. We also designed the communication guidelines document to serve as a communication reference for various satellites when looking for guidance in navigating the Über den Tellerrand communication network. The creation of communication guidelines was also geared towards reducing confusion or uncertainty among staff members in various satellites when it comes to deciding what online platform to use, how to communicate using certain channels, as well as other communication principles. We created our communication guidelines by analyzing the communication structure of Über den Tellerand from a top-down approach. The analysis provided a step-by-step breakdown on communication procedures staff use to relay information to other staff, volunteers, participants, and satellites, gathered from the Berlin satellite focus group. The document also provided a step-by-step breakdown on current communication platforms used by the organization. In addition to providing detailed communication guidelines in the document, we strived to make sure the document showcased the brand of Über den Tellerrand, its mission, and communication structure.

3.3.3 Assessing and Refining the Communication Framework

Based on our coding and research, the communication framework was refined to fit Über den Tellerrand's mission focused on **interpersonal** and **spontaneous communication**, fostering improved connection among staff, volunteers, and participants in the organization. In this project, we define interpersonal as **one-on-one connection**. We structured the communication guidelines around the themes of connection and community to demonstrate Über den Tellerrand's inclusive atmosphere. Moreover, we established continuous conversations with the Berlin Network Team, consisting of the three Berlin network coordinators, to assess our guidelines. By communicating with the Berlin Network Team, we ensured that both our team and Über den Tellerrand were in agreement regarding the structure, content, and branding details in the document. Overall, our guidelines offered standardized communication protocols to help provide clarity in staff communication with the various groups of the Über den Tellerrand network.

Our methods offered streamline data collection, evaluation, and collaboration for our team to investigate and produce effective recommendations to improve Über den Tellerrand's networking and engagement with staff, volunteers, participants, and satellites. Through achieving our objectives, we produced recommendations and deliverables based on our analysis of the responses from our interviews, focus groups, and questionnaire. Overall, our first two objectives equipped us with valuable knowledge on how Über den Tellerrand and other similar NGOs approached the challenge of communicating and networking amidst the pandemic. Our third objective gave us the opportunity to design and iterate a communication framework by interacting with the Berlin Network Team. The combination of our three objectives helped equip our team with tools to produce recommendations to enhance Über den Tellerand's communication and network engagement strategies for the future.

4.0 Results & Analysis

This chapter includes results for the project's three objectives. First, we conducted interviews with the Angels-Net Foundation, the Goethe-Institut in Boston, and African Communication Education (ACE). Next, we analyzed raw survey data collected by Über den Tellerrand as well as the 29 responses to our own questionnaire. In addition, we conducted two focus groups: one with staffers from the Berlin site, and one with multiple satellite representatives. Last, we created a communication guidelines document based on our research.

4.1 Best Communication Practices in NGOs

This section discusses the results and analysis from our interviews with organizations with similar missions and structure to Über den Tellerrand. The organizations we interviewed include Angels-Net, the Goethe-Institut, and ACE.

4.1.1 Communication at the Angels-Net Foundation

Our first interview was with a representative of **Angels-Net Foundation**, a nonprofit organization founded in Boston, Massachusetts in 2009 by two Liberian refugees. Angels-Net has two locations: one in Worcester, Massachusetts and the other in West Boylston, Massachusetts. The Worcester location has nine staff members, 15 to 20 volunteers, and six board members. The main goal of the Angels-Net Worcester location is to address the integration challenges that a growing number of immigrants and refugees face in the Greater Worcester community through various engaging activities. Before the pandemic, Angels-Net relied heavily on in-person communication as well as phone calls. The organization infrequently used emails due to various degrees of technological capability. During the pandemic, Angels-Net adjusted to learning Zoom and moved all meetings online.

Despite online challenges, Angels-Net maintained its “one-on-one” atmosphere, which is core to the communication structure of the organization. Throughout the interview, the theme of **interpersonal communication** was emphasized with the constant use of expressions like “one-on-one” and “interpersonal,” as well as “we’re strong as a team,” showcasing the strong bonds individuals formed in the organization (Appendix F). Another key theme identified was the idea of **being adaptive** when circumstances change. The representative described how Angels-Net changed its methods of accomplishing various tasks like communicating, recruiting, and distributing information. Angels-Net needed to accept change in order to adapt to the pandemic. The organization used email slightly more, but not as its central method of communication. Angels-Net also began using WhatsApp to distribute information to its community through poster messages. Moreover, the representative reiterated that Angels-Net had to learn new communication methods such as Zoom and WhatsApp, which highlights the theme of being adaptive. The representative found that a significant amount of marketing can be done on WhatsApp, and enjoyed the flexibility of being able to work from home using Zoom. Another key takeaway from the interview was that change cannot be successful in an organization unless

everyone is excited and motivated about the change; otherwise, “everyone will put their hands up and just give up.” Hence, the key takeaways from this interview were the importance of **maintaining interpersonal communication** in small organizations, the importance of **being adaptive** when circumstances change, and the importance of **exciting members** of an organization about change.

4.1.2 Communication at the Goethe-Institut

Our next interview was with the director of language programs at the **Goethe-Institut** in Boston, Massachusetts. The Goethe-Institut is a cultural institute focused on promoting the study of the German language abroad and encouraging international and cultural exchange. The organization has 157 sites in 98 countries that provide information on German culture and language to people who want to learn more about Germany. The Goethe-Institut also offers professional development for teachers and programming for students to excite them about learning a language while also fostering intercultural understanding when interacting with people from different cultures. The Boston location works with schools and teachers in New England to help promote the German language and culture.

Prior to the pandemic, the Goethe-Institut visited schools often to excite students about its offerings. The organization also created a weekly newsletter, promoted on Facebook and Instagram. While formal staff meetings were scheduled weekly, casual conversations occurred frequently by visiting someone’s office, or talking around the coffee maker. A summer camp was also held each year in Portland, Oregon. During the pandemic, the weekly newsletter was continued online. Communications switched to Microsoft Teams and the director mentioned how he “had a lot more meetings than before.” The pandemic made it difficult for the Goethe-Institut to reach students directly so it relied heavily on meeting with teachers to promote events. Another challenge was developing **virtual offerings that were attractive** for students to want to spend another 10 to 15 hours in front of a computer screen. The Portland, Oregon summer camp was transitioned to be virtual, utilizing Zoom and a platform which allowed participants to create an online avatar and navigate a three-dimensional house. The director found a decrease in participation due to “**Zoom fatigue**,” since students were spending a lot of time in online class. To improve online engagement, the director mentioned the use of a new platform called **Remo**, which provides spatial audio over a virtual table, fostering individual conversations and engagement among users. The director emphasized the importance of **defining a purpose** behind each platform used as well as choosing new platforms for a **clear reason** (Appendix G).

Despite the challenges, the pandemic allowed the Goethe-Institut to reach a wider audience. People from Maine, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island have all attended events online, which previously would have required attendees to travel to Boston. The director felt that online events have been a great improvement for the organization and does not think they will go back to the pre-pandemic ways. Hence, the key takeaways from this interview were the importance of **attractive virtual offerings, improvement in event attendance**, and the importance of a **clear purpose behind communication platforms**.

4.1.3 Communication at African Community Education

Founded by a Liberian refugee and a Massachusetts medical school student in 2006, **African Communication Education (ACE)** served refugee children fleeing the Liberian Civil War. The children were placed into grade levels based on age despite many having little or no formal education prior to coming to the United States. ACE's founders recognized the need for education and began a one-on-one tutoring and homework help program. In 2007, ACE partnered with Worcester Public Schools and launched a Saturday program to act as a sixth day of school. Currently, ACE educates and empowers African refugee and immigrant youth through educational, leadership, and cultural programming. Its team consists of thirteen staff members, eight board members, and volunteers. We interviewed a volunteer coordinator and program coordinator who provided information about the organization's transition to the pandemic and the steps taken to maintain its mission and reach.

Prior to the pandemic, ACE had bi-weekly meetings with staff and parents. They also communicated through telephone calls and in-person meetings. Staff shared documents with each other through Google Docs. As in-person events shut down, the organization transitioned to Zoom and Google Meets for virtual meetings. It was apparent that ACE developed a solid understanding regarding the **purpose** of each online platform (Appendix H). For instance, the ACE representatives expressed that Zoom could be used to foster interpersonal communication by utilizing breakout rooms. Hence, while ACE used Google Meets for its staff meetings, Zoom was preferred for tutoring sessions due to the breakout room feature. Moreover, ACE found that it was easier for tutors to share screens on Zoom in comparison to Google Meets. To keep in touch with students and volunteers, the organization uses WhatsApp. Staff members found it easy to communicate with clients and students using WhatsApp. The organization also uses Facebook and Twitter to communicate with volunteers as well as grow its social network. ACE mentioned that using several online platforms to connect with their community was advantageous since representatives were more likely to receive responses and foster engagement.

Another main point ACE expressed was its use of **standardized procedures**, with staff members following an employee handbook. The marketing team also follows a clear procedure for posting and outreaching online. Since the start of the pandemic, ACE has constantly **reviewed and refined** the employee handbook, showing that the organization has had to adapt throughout the pandemic. In addition, less in-person engagements with parents and students amplified the language barrier in ACE's diverse community. To combat this language barrier, ACE created WhatsApp groups based on language proficiency to speak with parents who do not understand English well. To assist the main groups of the ACE community, the organization created WhatsApp groups in French, Rwandan, Swahili, and Kirundi. Overall, the key takeaways from interviewing ACE were the importance of a clear **purpose** behind each of its online communication tools, the use of **standardized procedures**, as well as **adaptability** amidst the pandemic.

4.1.4 Main Takeaways for Best Communication Practices

Our team identified **four key takeaways** regarding best communication practices:

1. Organizations are finding new ways to promote interpersonal connections online;
2. Adaptability creates an atmosphere for the implementation of new ideas;
3. Exciting others and explaining the need for change eases the transition to new strategies;
4. Developing a clear purpose behind each communication platform provides clarity when communicating online.

All organizations emphasized the importance of **interpersonal connections** in their organizations and how informal communication has been diminished since meetings and events transitioned to online settings. Although the organizations struggled to find an online platform that provided more one-on-one communication, they all believe it is important to foster personal connections. They also spoke about the importance of being **adaptable**. If a certain method of communication was not working well, then the organizations re-evaluated what they were doing and proposed a new method. By approaching online communication with an open mindset, these organizations were able to discover new communication platforms, engagement techniques, and other methods of operation that have worked better in some cases in comparison to pre-COVID-19 techniques. In addition to adaptability, the organizations emphasized the importance of **exciting others within the network about change**. In order for change to be successful, the entire team needs to be motivated and understand the importance behind the change. The organizations highlighted the importance of explaining the need for change and that transitioning to a new method is not as difficult as it may initially seem.

In addition, the organizations emphasized the importance of **developing a clear purpose** behind each communication platform used. Understanding the best features and limitations of platforms provides clarity when deciding which platform works best in certain situations. The organizations used similar **platforms** to Über den Tellerrand, including **Zoom, Google Meets, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Facebook, and Instagram**. Zoom and Google Meets have been useful for online meetings with staff, volunteers, and participants; WhatsApp has been useful for instant communication between volunteers and participants; Microsoft Teams has been useful for communication between staff as well as sharing documents; and social media such as Facebook has been useful for disseminating information to participants regarding events and programs. During our interview with the Goethe-Institut, we learned about a new platform called **Remo**, which is video-conferencing software that allows participants to engage in individual or small group conversations as well as move around a virtual space. After researching similar platforms, we discovered **Kumospace** which has very similar features, but allows the host to choose the most appropriate atmosphere for conversations.

4.2 Über den Tellerrand's Network Engagement Post-COVID-19

This section discusses the results and analysis from the survey data that Über den Tellerrand provided to our group, as well as the data from our own questionnaire. Moreover, we discuss the results and analysis from our Berlin staff focus group, as well as our satellite focus group. We hoped to learn about trends related to events, satellite drawbacks, and participant experiences with Über den Tellerrand.

Über den Tellerrand provided us with raw survey data from three questionnaires:

1. 2019 Satellite Survey, with 20 respondents
2. 2020 Satellite Survey, with 31 respondents
3. Five Years on Integration, with 56 respondents

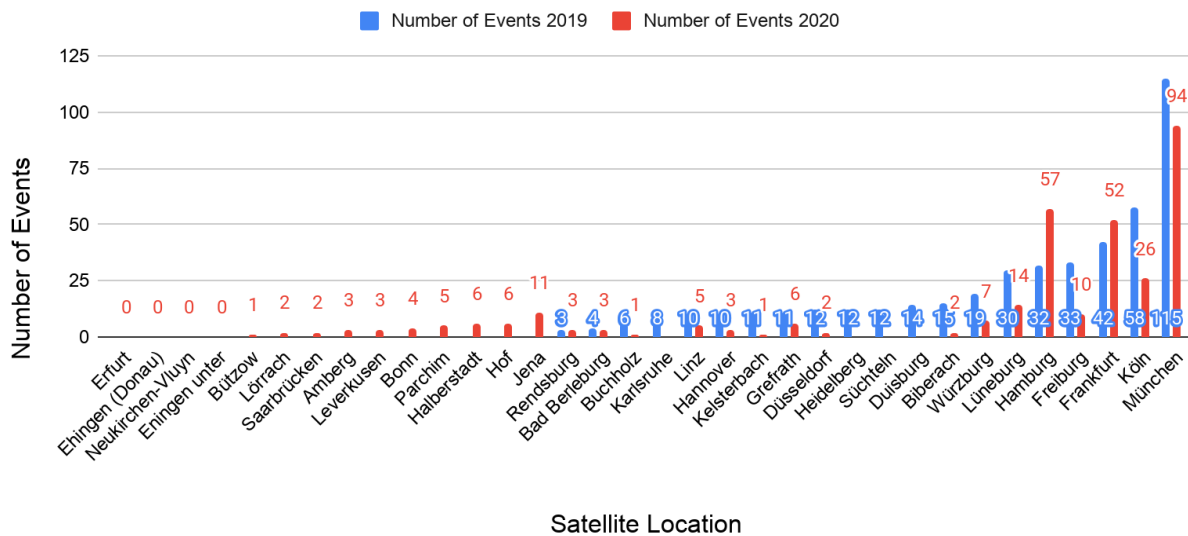
4.2.1 Comparing 2019 and 2020 Satellite Survey Data

Each year, Über den Tellerrand sends surveys to its satellite locations to understand the development of the location during the previous year. The **2019 Satellite Survey** focused on internal relations, event affinity, and general improvements. The **2020 Satellite Survey** focused also on internal relations and event affinity, the impacts of COVID-19, community connection, and overall improvements for the organization. Not every satellite that answered the 2019 survey also answered the 2020 survey. In addition, some satellites that responded to the 2020 survey did not respond to the 2019 survey. However, there was enough data to analyze the status of Über den Tellerrand and illuminate key features from various satellites.

The number of events held each year was asked in both satellite surveys. A consolidation of both years can be seen in Figure 11 with the number of events organized in 2019 indicated in blue and the number of events organized in 2020 indicated in red.

Figure 11

Number of Events Organized by Various Satellites in 2019 and 2020

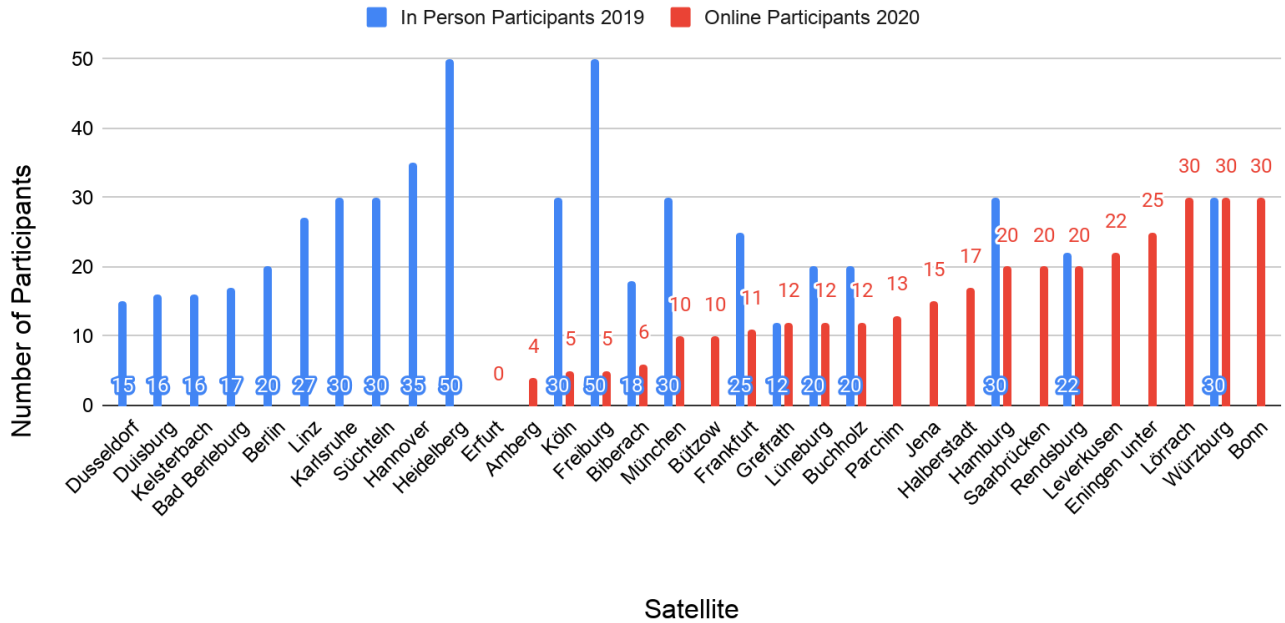


Most of the 17 satellites that answered both surveys showed a **decrease in events** held in 2020 compared to 2019. There were two exceptions where the number of events actually increased in 2020. These two satellites were the **Hamburg** and **Frankfurt** locations. Although the pandemic decreased the majority of satellite events, Hamburg and Frankfurt were able to engage members through fun online activities such as game nights or cooking events to **host more events** in 2020.

Another question asked in both surveys addressed the **average number of participants** that attended each event. The 2019 satellite survey only asked about in-person events since this was the only type of event held that year. The 2020 satellite survey asked about attendance at both in-person and online events. Comparisons between both event types in Figure 12 show the impact of the pandemic regarding online event attendance.

Figure 12

Number of Participants at In-Person Events in 2019 and Online Events in 2020

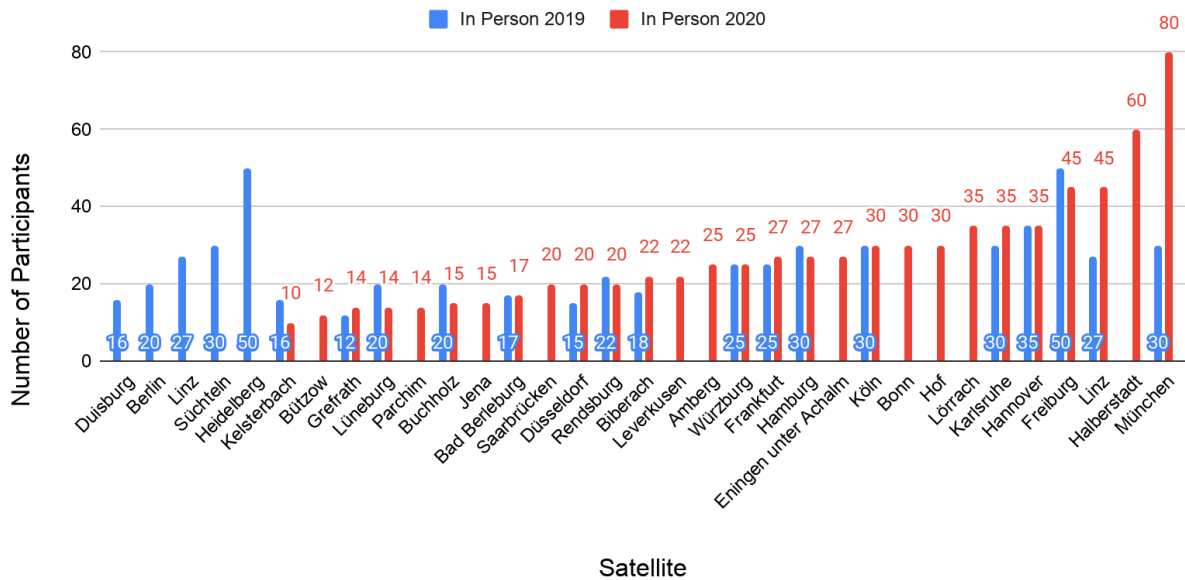


Every satellite reported a lower or equal average number of participants who attended online events in 2020. The pandemic caused Über den Tellerrand’s satellites to implement **new event formats**. As a result, the attendance at new events decreased. Participants who normally attended in-person events were not as enthusiastic about attending online events in 2020. Instead of engaging with the online community, participants skipped events altogether, holding out until event formats return to in-person once the pandemic is over. In addition, satellite locations such as Freiburg, which normally had 50 people at in-person events, showed a 90% decrease in attendance at their online events. The large decrease in participants suggested the need to **re-evaluate online event formats**.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, some satellites were still able to host **in-person events** in 2020 by abiding by German health mandates. As shown in Figure 13, the participation at in-person events in 2020 remained **relatively consistent** with participation at in-person events in 2019, with a few exceptions where satellites found effective ways to engage participants under COVID-19 regulations.

Figure 13

Number of Participants at In-Person Events in 2019 and 2020

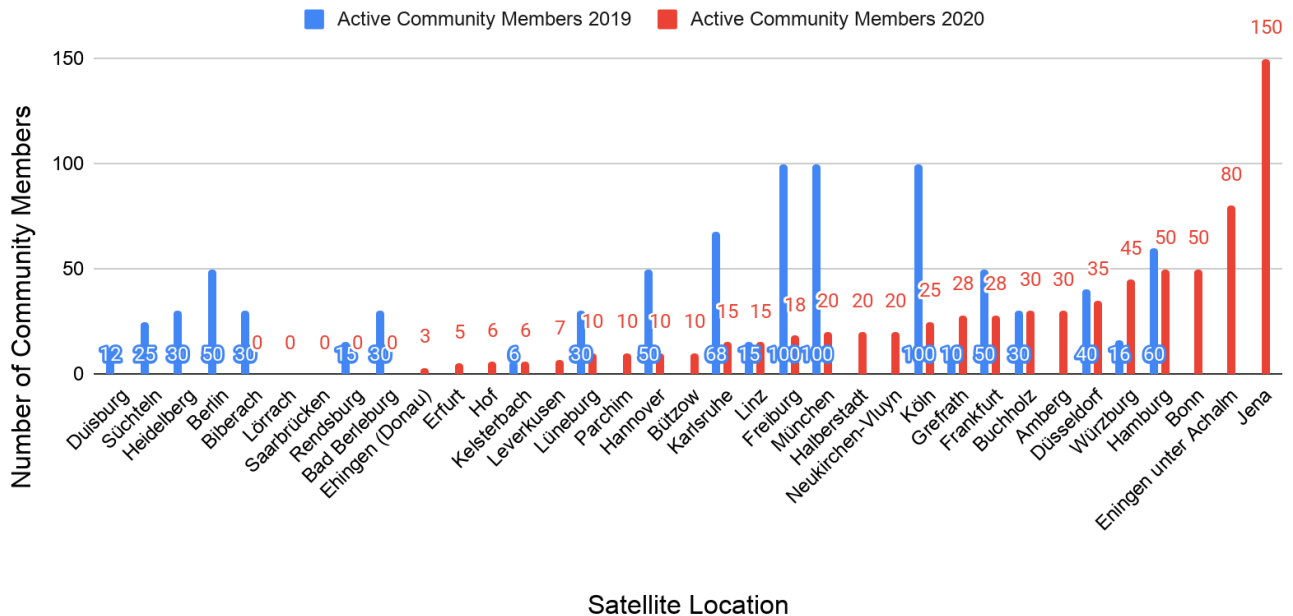


The data showed **no clear and collective trend** for the attendance levels at the satellites. Of the 17 satellites where there was data for both 2019 and 2020, seven of the satellites showed a **higher number of average participants** attending events in 2020. In addition, four satellites indicated an **equal number of participants** attending events in 2020 compared to 2019. The other six satellite locations recorded a **lower average number of participants** attending events in 2020. While the data did not show a clear trend on all the satellites collectively, one satellite found significant success during the pandemic with **in-person events**. The München (Munich) satellite reported an average of 80 participants attending in-person events in 2020. This was a 166% increase from the year prior and showed that satellites can still flourish amidst the pandemic. In our meetings with Über den Tellerrand, staff indicated Munich’s success came from a food cart that was able to operate outdoors for most of the summer. This type of event was in great demand when the pandemic caused many other attractions to shut down throughout the city.

Another key indicator of the success of a satellite was the **size of each satellite’s community**. Figure 14 shows the number of active community members at various satellite locations in 2019 and 2020.

Figure 14

Active Community Members at Satellite Locations in 2019 and 2020



The number of active community members **decreased or stayed the same at every satellite** location in 2020 besides two satellites, Grefrath and Würzburg. At these two locations, active community members increased by 180% and 181%, respectively. These two locations successfully fostered an **active online community** in 2020 which contributed to a stronger network for the satellite. Grefrath especially experienced great success in 2020 not only by **growing its active community members** but also by **growing the number of participants** who attend in-person events. Unfortunately, many of the other satellites did not see such success. The three largest communities in 2019, Freiburg, Munich, and Köln (Cologne) experienced at least a 75% decrease in community size in 2020. Online formats caused participants who previously connected in person to disengage from the communities altogether. The two largest communities in 2020, Eninger unter Achalm and Jena, contributed their success to being associated with other organization community centers. These satellites have projects with other organizations who contribute to the overall community of the region.

4.2.2 Comparing Our Questionnaire Data with the ‘Five Years on Integration’ Study

In contrast to the two surveys analyzed in the last section, our questionnaire and Über den Tellerrand’s “Five Years on Integration” survey were answered predominantly by **event participants**. Hence, we used a different perspective to **enhance our understanding of network engagement** in Über den Tellerrand both prior to and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the key aspects of external communication at Über den Tellerrand is the ability to

attract new members. By understanding how participants heard about Über den Tellerrand, we improved our understanding of the organization’s reach into society. We asked participants to indicate how they heard about Über den Tellerrand. Figure 15 visualizes the results.

Figure 15

How Participants Heard About Über den Tellerrand

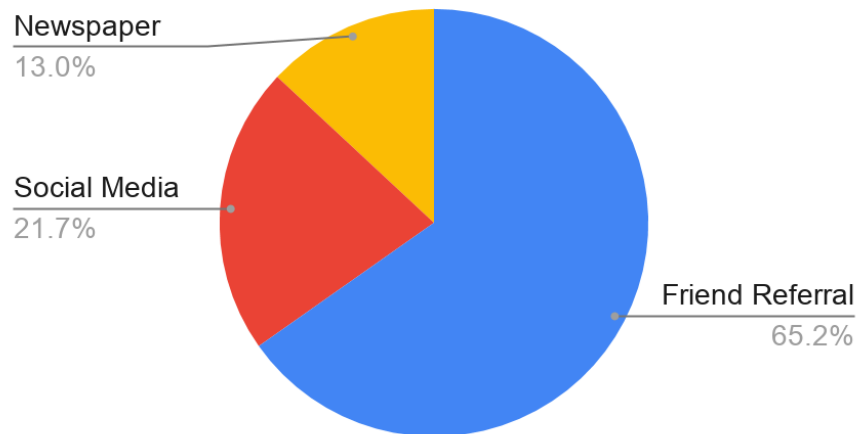
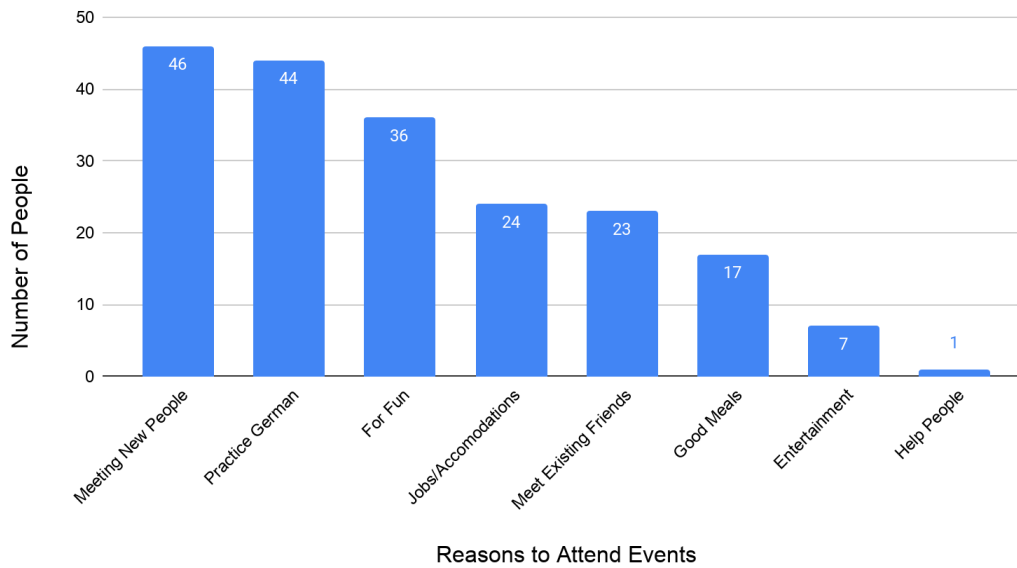


Figure 15 shows that the primary mechanism through which Über den Tellerrand grows its network has been **friend referrals**. While this result demonstrates the interpersonal nature of Über den Tellerrand, it is somewhat surprising to note that the organization’s social media channels played a small role, considering the increased use of online platforms. With society becoming more interconnected online as a result of COVID-19, there is significant potential to grow Über den Tellerrand’s social media presence as a mechanism for **network growth**.

Participants of the “Five Years on Integration” survey were asked **why they attend** Über den Tellerrand events. Figure 16 visualizes how participants answered this question and reveals the main ways Über den Tellerrand affects people with its various events.

Figure 16

Why Participants Attend Events at Über den Tellerrand (Five Years on Integration)



One of the key takeaways from Figure 16 is the **interpersonal nature** of Über den Tellerrand. The category “Meeting New People” had the most frequency in responses, signifying that the interpersonal nature of Über den Tellerrand has truly resonated with the participants. Moreover, “Practicing German” received nearly as many responses, highlighting the significance of the **language aspect** of Über den Tellerrand. Another key takeaway was that many participants attend Über den Tellerrand events to escape the stresses of everyday life and enjoy themselves through fun activities.

After analyzing the main reasons why Über den Tellerrand participants attend events, we evaluated the most **popular events** at the organization using data from “Five Years on Integration.” Figure 17 visualizes how participants responded when asked what their **favorite event** at Über den Tellerrand was.

Figure 17

Most Popular Events at Über den Tellerrand (Five Years on Integration)

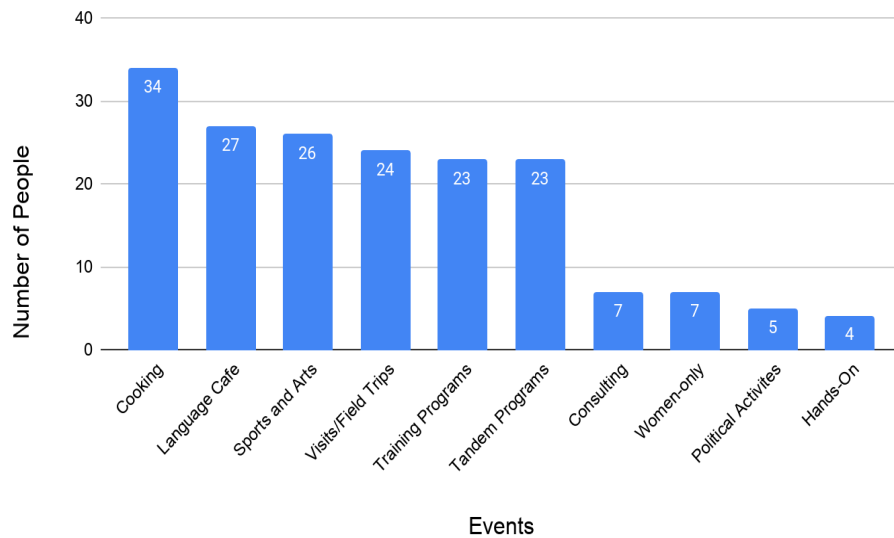


Figure 17 reveals that the foundational events that traditionally represent Über den Tellerrand were the most popular among the participants. More specifically, **cooking** and the **language cafe** events were the categories with the **largest frequency of responses**. The significance of this data was that it showcased events **participants viewed as popular and interesting**. More key takeaways from Figure 17 show that sports and arts, field trips, training programs, and tandem programs also received a considerable number of responses.

We asked a similar question in our questionnaire to understand event popularity among participants. We used a table-ranking system where participants ranked their favorability of events from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated their most favorite and 5 indicated their least favorite. Since some participants associated the same number for different events, we took the **average rank of each event** and compiled the results in a table. The events that scored lower were the most popular among the participants. Table 1 below displays the results.

Table 1

Current Event Rankings

Event	Average Ranking
Cooking	1.08
Language Cafe	1.4
Games	2.44
Dancing	3.08
Professional Networking	3.26

The results of current event popularity from our questionnaire **reflect the results** from “Five Years on Integration.” In both questionnaires, the **cooking** and **language cafe** events were the **most popular events** among the participants. Hence, we developed a more robust understanding of current event popularity at Über den Tellerrand.

To better understand trends related to events at Über den Tellerrand, we **brainstormed event ideas** and had participants rank their preference from 1 to 10, where 1 indicated their most favorite and 10 indicated their least favorite. Once again, we compiled the data in a table to showcase the average rank of each event.

Table 2*Prospective Event Rankings*

Event	Average Ranking
Discussion Nights	2.39
Cooking Competition	2.62
Walk Buddy Program	2.68
TED Talk	2.78
Mental Health Discussions	2.79
Arts and Crafts	2.9
Scavenger Hunts	3.32
Music Lessons	3.86
Talent Show	4.93
Video Game Tournament	5.26

The results in Table 2 highlight the **interpersonal nature of participants** at Über den Tellerrand, with the popularity of prospective events such as “**Discussion Nights**,” and the “**Walk Buddy Program**,” which are inherently interpersonal in nature. Moreover, the popularity of these prospective events signifies **the desire for more interpersonal connections** among participants since the start of the pandemic; the decreased interpersonal atmosphere correlates with **greater demand for more interpersonal events**. Figure 18 further explores the idea of decreased interpersonal engagement among participants since the start of the pandemic.

Figure 18

Frequency of Engagements with Other Participants

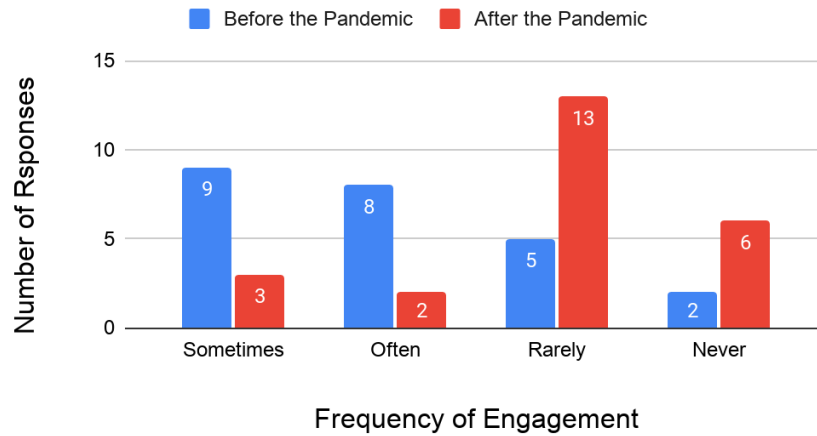
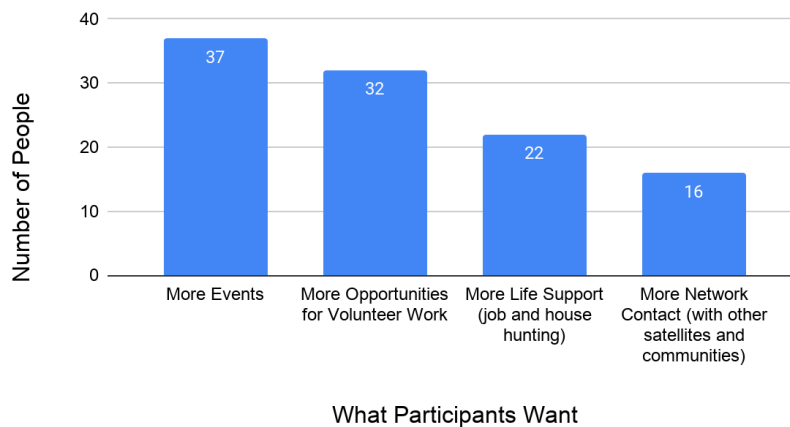


Figure 18 demonstrates the **decrease in interpersonal engagements** between participants since the start of the pandemic. This decrease in participant engagement correlates with the demand for more interpersonal events, shown in Table 2.

Next, we can evaluate some of the requests participants have for *Über den Tellerrand*. Figure 19 visualizes how participants responded when asked **what they want from *Über den Tellerrand*** to enhance their experiences.

Figure 19

*What Participants Want from *Über den Tellerrand* (Five Years on Integration)*



The top request among participants was for *Über den Tellerrand* to **host more events**. This result highlights that events at *Über den Tellerrand* are resonating with people, to the degree that participants simply want to attend more events. Although “More Events” received the most number of responses, each category in Figure 19 received considerable support. Even though

“More Network Contact” had the smallest frequency of responses, 28 percent of respondents signified that this was their top request for Über den Tellerrand.

To further understand the requests of participants amidst the start of the pandemic, we included short answer questions in our questionnaire that asked for their **experiences** and **opinions**. We compiled the answers in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Short Answer Responses from Our Questionnaire

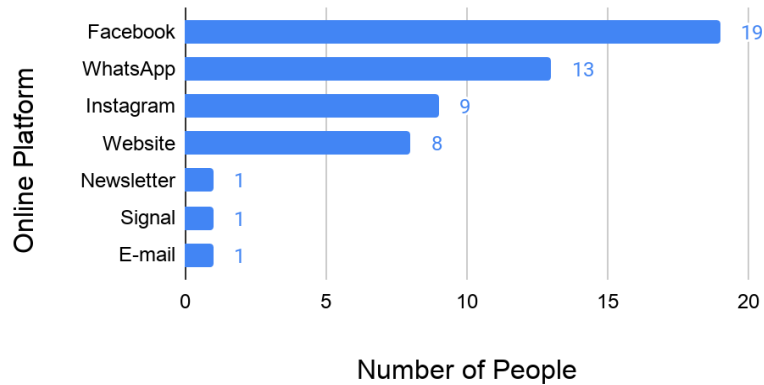
Questions	Answers/Quotes
What in particular can Über den Tellerrand do to enhance your online experiences with the organization?	<p>“organize some interesting events”</p> <p>“better reach out... use different platforms for advertising. Currently everything is through social media”</p> <p>“I really just do not want to do online events”</p>
How has your online communication experience been with other participants, volunteers, and staff?	<p>“Sometimes it is difficult to receive a quick response from the volunteers.” →decrease in spontaneous communication</p> <p>“lack of motivation when it comes to online activities”</p> <p>“good but I just do not have the motivation”</p> <p>“good/positive/very good” x5</p>

The response regarding more interesting events solidifies the need to think critically about event type and structure when considering ways to **enhance participation** in Über den Tellerrand’s events. Moreover, the responses on Über den Tellerrand’s **advertising platforms** raised a different perspective regarding the organization’s use of social media; previously, we noted that there was potential for improved social media use in order to attract more people. In Table 3, a participant noted that one issue with advertising in Über den Tellerrand is that everything is through social media, leaving out other methods altogether. In addition, the theme of **decreased spontaneous communication** between participants and volunteers came up in the responses. Lastly, several participants communicated a decrease in **motivation** with regards to online events, which draws a parallel to one of the key takeaways from the interviews with other organizations; the representatives from other organizations highlighted that network motivation is a crucial part of change. From our questionnaire data, the theme of decreased participant motivation emerged, accentuating the need to address the issue.

Revisiting the usage of social media in Über den Tellerrand, the following figure reiterates the point that social media is used predominantly by the organization as an **advertisement mechanism** for future events.

Figure 20

How Participants Hear about Future Events at Über den Tellerrand



Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp comprise the **social media network** of Über den Tellerrand. Figure 20 shows that these three social media platforms are used the most to **notify participants about future events**. When evaluating different ways to spread information regarding future events, there is **potential for growth in Über den Tellerrand’s website and email** usage to make event information more widespread.

With regards to **decreased participant motivation** in online events, we can use Table 4 below to expand our understanding of the issue. Participants were asked to rank the most **pressing barriers** preventing them from participating more frequently in Über den Tellerrand. Once again, the average ranking was taken for each category and the **lowest score corresponded to the most pressing barrier**.

Table 4

Most Pressing Barriers Preventing Increased Event Participation

Barrier	Average Ranking
Lack of Will to Participate	2.93
Uninteresting Activities	3.93
Mental Health	3.96
Uncomfortable with Online Tools	4.21
Access to Internet	4.29

The results in Table 4 emphasize the significance of **decreased participant motivation** at Über den Tellerrand's online events. Moreover, the category "Uninteresting Activities" comes second as a barrier preventing increased online participation, highlighting the **significance of event type and structure**.

4.2.3 Main Takeaways from Satellite Surveys and Questionnaire

With in-person events being difficult in 2020, satellites that were able to host in-person events thrived from the greater demand as result of the pandemic. The success experienced by satellites such as **Munich, Linz, Hamburg, and Frankfurt** showed the accomplishments attainable during the pandemic.

In addition to addressing the in-person event structure, we identified a need to consider online events when assessing opportunities to increase network engagement. A large number of participants expressed a decrease in motivation for attending online events. At the same time, however, participants communicated their preferences regarding **event type**. Cooking and "Language Cafe" events received the most support for events Über den Tellerrand currently hosts. For prospective events, "Discussion Night" and "Walk Buddy Program" were among the most popular. Another main takeaway was that **social media** has not been a significant mechanism to learn about Über den Tellerrand, in comparison to friend referrals.

4.2.4 Evaluating the Berlin Staff Focus Group

After inductively coding the responses from the Berlin staff focus group, our team identified three key themes (Appendix I):

1. Decrease in Interpersonal Communication
2. Decrease in Spontaneous Communication
3. Confusion with Communication Platforms

Due to the transition to online communication, Über den Tellerrand experienced a **decrease in interpersonal communication** between staff members, volunteers, and participants. Meetings over Zoom have not provided the same one-on-one connection as in-person meetings. Staff have been unable to have in-person coffee breaks and informal conversations in between their day-to-day tasks, as they had before the pandemic; these coffee breaks served as stress relievers from work, as well as opportunities to strengthen connections between individuals. We learned from our focus group that staff "do not have a lot of informal meetings anymore." To add a sense of personal connection, the team uses a channel in Slack dedicated to conversations they would have during coffee breaks; they often use emojis to show more expression when communicating. However, the staff felt that there has been a **decrease in spontaneous communication** when communicating online. They found it difficult to engage in spontaneous conversations while staring at a computer screen all day, switching between communication platforms. One participant expressed that it takes a significant amount of time and energy to be

able to talk to someone online. For example, to host virtual meetings, staff need to create an appointment on Outlook, and then a meeting on Zoom.

The Berlin staff also mentioned that they get **overwhelmed** or **confused when using the communication platforms**. The focus group participants even expressed a link between confusion relating to online platforms and the decrease in spontaneous interactions, saying “it’s mainly switching between different [online platforms] that also does not allow for spontaneity.” Moreover, one participant expressed that she gets overwhelmed with the number of notifications she receives from the various platforms and wishes that they could be simplified or integrated to reduce confusion. Another participant mentioned that Slack has too many channels, making it difficult to locate information in a channel. They also pointed out that many in-person methods were converted to online formats, which can be difficult if one does not know the best features of each platform. Our team referred to these themes and the staff’s personal experiences, along with the best practices from other organizations outlined before, to design our communication framework.

4.2.5 Evaluating the Satellite Focus Group

After inductively coding the transcript (Appendix J) from the satellite focus group, we identified nine main themes:

1. In-Person Events
2. Online Events
3. German COVID-19 Protocols
4. Challenges of Online Events
5. Online Engagement Techniques
6. Decrease in Interpersonal Connection
7. Challenges Regarding Language
8. Satellite Networking
9. Feedback

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the representatives from Cologne, Frankfurt, and Hamburg communicated that they successfully hosted many **in-person events** in 2020. The in-person events were held outside, and some examples of event types were picnics, dancing, and hiking. However, the in-person event with the most participation was **outdoor cooking** in small groups. In order to maintain contact tracing, the satellites that hosted in-person events used registration sheets to keep a list of names and contact information of participants.

While the most successful **online events** were online cooking classes, language cafes, and game nights, there were many **challenges of being online** that the satellite representatives noted. To begin, the topic of “Zoom fatigue” was introduced once again after being mentioned in our interviews with other NGOs, reinforcing the need to focus on online engagement practices in a communication framework for Über den Tellerrand. With regards to **online engagement**, breakout rooms used over Zoom enhanced interpersonal conversations. In addition to tools such

as Zoom breakout rooms, warm up activities and social media engagement techniques also improved online engagement.

Despite efforts to enhance online engagement, staff members mentioned there was a decrease in **personal connections** with other staffers, volunteers, and participants. We learned that staff found it difficult to foster personal connections with volunteers over WhatsApp without prior interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the need for more interpersonal communication was reinforced when we discussed **language barriers**. One staff member, a non-native German speaker, expressed that their German improved as a result of one-on-one interactions. Although we understood some of the benefits of interpersonal communication, we did not previously take into account the language factor, which is especially significant at a diverse organization like Über den Tellerrand. Moreover, events such as the language cafe which focus on discussions between people allowed participants to improve their German.

Furthermore, a connection was made between **challenges regarding language and feedback** in Über den Tellerrand. The satellite staff members mentioned that non-native German speakers were less likely to provide feedback, hence making it more difficult to collect everyone's feedback equally. Therefore, the satellite focus group allowed us to draw a connection between language barriers and feedback, which we did not previously identify.

With regards to **satellite networking**, we learned that satellites such as Freiburg and Hamburg co-hosted events with other Über den Tellerrand locations. In addition, the satellite staff members met often with other satellites, mainly Berlin, allowing them to exchange information and updates about events, protocol, and other business. The co-hosting strategy was taken note of as a model for other satellites, since more frequent engagement with the Über den Tellerrand network was found to be advantageous for adopting new practices used at other satellites. We also learned more about the SAFIR program, which involves volunteers at Über den Tellerrand. More particularly, SAFIRs meet every two weeks in smaller groups, and every two or three months for a larger Zoom meeting with the SAFIR network.

The satellite focus group also helped us learn more about general **communication platform** protocols at Über den Tellerrand. Although we were aware of some Slack challenges, we were told that the platform has a user friendly interface, solidifying our position on **not recommending a platform change** from Slack to a software like Discord. We also learned that staff prefer to link documents from Google Drive to Slack rather than share documents due to data security. Moreover, we learned that WhatsApp was not commonly used to communicate between satellite staff members, but instead between SAFIRs and volunteers. Another point we noted was that volunteers and SAFIRs did not want an extra messenger for online communication and were unanimously comfortable with WhatsApp.

4.2.6 Main Takeaways from Focus Groups

Analysis of both the Berlin staff and satellite focus groups showed a **decrease** in **one-on-one** and **spontaneous connections** due to the loss of informal interactions, such as in-person coffee breaks. Moreover, we noticed a correlation between the decrease in spontaneous

interactions and staff feelings of being **overwhelmed** as a result of many online platforms for communication. Staff members also reported **decreased levels of motivation** due to being online for extended periods of time when planning, discussing, and executing events. In addition, we identified a **language barrier** when communicating online; staff members indicated that native German speakers were more likely to participate in discussions and provide feedback. Despite the challenges, some satellites developed methods to foster more engagement and enhance communication. Examples include creating a “coffee break” channel in Slack, using emojis frequently to convey messages visually across all languages, as well as utilizing Zoom breakout rooms to engage with people more closely. Overall, in addition to the challenges and struggles, we took note of many advantageous practices that would be useful to spread across the entire Über den Tellerrand network.

4.3 Design and Refinement of a New Communication Framework

Analysis from all interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups allowed us to identify areas of improvement in Über den Tellerrand’s communication and network engagement structure. Our analysis of best practices gave us options to determine an appropriate style for the communication framework to enhance the organization’s communication and network engagement techniques. This section lays out how we identified the direction of the communication framework and outlines that framework.

4.3.1 Identifying the Direction of the Communication Framework

Through our analysis, we identified areas of improvement to address in a communication framework for Über den Tellerrand. We learned that:

- 1) There is a need to address the decrease in **spontaneous** and **interpersonal engagements** with all groups in Über den Tellerrand’s network;
- 2) There is a need to provide more **clarity** regarding the use of various online platforms in Über den Tellerrand’s organization eliminating confusion among staffers;
- 3) There is potential to **strengthen connections between satellites** at Über den Tellerrand;
- 4) There is a need to restructure the **feedback mechanism** at Über den Tellerrand;
- 5) There is potential for growth in Über den Tellerrand’s **social media practices**, in a manner that would generate more engagement in its online community, and attract new people more regularly.

The listed areas of improvement suggest that different branches of communication need to be addressed at Über den Tellerrand. To enhance communication and networking in a structured format, our interviews with ACE and the Goethe-Institut indicated that a favorable approach would be to create a set of guidelines that clearly and thoroughly provides suggestions for communication practices within Über den Tellerrand. Providing guidelines in an organized manner would allow Über den Tellerrand’s communication practices to become more detailed,

fostering clarity and minimizing confusion, while boosting engagement within the online community.

4.3.2 Outlining the Communication Guidelines Document

Based on our areas of improvement in section 4.3.1, we created an initial draft of the communication guidelines document, which was then reviewed by the Berlin Network Team. After incorporating their feedback and comments, the final version of the communication guidelines document was created, with its front page shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21

Front Cover of Communication Practices and Suggestions Document



The communications guidelines document (Appendix K) includes five chapters:

1. Purpose
2. Ingredients of Strong Communication
3. Tools for Online Communication
4. Communication in Our Network
5. Berlin Network Team

The “**Purpose**” chapter articulates the reasons for implementing communication guidelines, the target audience, which are staff members, and the mission statement of Über den Tellerrand. Moreover, the purpose chapter allows staff members to reflect on their communication practices to evaluate if they support the mission of Über den Tellerrand.

The “**Ingredients of Communication**” chapter represents the important components for strong communication. The term “ingredients” was used to represent the key communication principles of Über den Tellerrand since cooking is a foundational activity in the organization. Three key ingredients for strong communication were crafted and represented with a cake to symbolize how key ingredients combine to form strong communication (Figure 22). The three key ingredients included in our communication guideline document are found below:

1. **Fostering One-on-One Connections:** Communication strategies are used to foster spontaneous and one-on-one communication.
2. **Motivating Others to Collaborate:** Communication strategies create opportunities, relationships, and environments that make individuals want to collaborate across all satellites.
3. **Creating Spaces for Feedback:** Spaces are created for individuals to express anonymous feedback to refine our communication strategies and allow people from all walks of life to be heard.

Figure 22

Ingredients of Communication



These ingredients promote effective communication within Über den Tellerrand’s network and fit the brand of the organization. Fostering one-on-one connections promotes the idea of interpersonal and informal interactions. Motivating others to collaborate addresses network engagement, such that satellites and individuals are more motivated to engage in conversations and events. Creating spaces for feedback emphasizes the importance of making everyone’s voice in the network heard, as well as invites opportunities to improve the communication structure of Über den Tellerrand. This emphasis on feedback creates a structure

where network coordinators are able to gain a better sense of what other staff members think of the organization's communication structure, leading to constant improvement. Moreover, encouraging satellites to pursue a culture of feedback in their community of volunteers and participants will make individuals feel more engaged, welcomed, and involved.

The “**Tools for Online Communication**” chapter provides clarity regarding the main online tools used across Über den Tellerrand's network in three distinct sections. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the main online platforms used. The next section includes the benefits and limitations of the online platforms in a table format. The last section includes a detailed list of specific features each platform offers. For a tool such as Slack, the features were broken up into the following categories: finding information, sharing information, reducing notifications, developing interpersonal connections, and promoting engagements. By having detailed information on the online tools Über den Tellerrand uses in an organized manner, staff members can refer to the guidelines in a moment of uncertainty. By minimizing online platform confusion, there is greater potential to foster more spontaneous communication.

The “**Communication in our Network**” chapter addresses how to communicate with the various groups of Über den Tellerrand. In order to foster more network cohesion, this chapter details communication with Berlin staff and satellites. By improving the internal communication, satellites can be more connected with headquarters in Berlin, as well as with the rest of the network, promoting the concept of various satellites working as one team. Moreover, this chapter includes information on communication with volunteers and participants with suggestions on how to communicate effectively on each platform.

The “**Berlin Network Team**” chapter includes the contact information and profile pictures of the network coordinators at the Berlin satellite, adding a personal touch to the communication guidelines document.

Overall, the communication guidelines document offers a new perspective for communication inside the Über den Tellerrand network; the document was created using informal, suggestive language, ensuring that satellites can choose to adopt the guidelines and tailor them to their own networks while still maintaining greater connections and network cohesion within the Über den Tellerrand community.

5.0 Recommendations

Our recommendations for Über den Tellerrand detail how to enhance communication and engagement in the organization's network. We provided recommendations to enhance staff communication, methods to better connect satellites, and a mechanism to enhance feedback. We also provided recommendations to improve attendance and engagement with online and in-person events, as well as suggestions on social media practices.

5.1 Recommendations for Enhancing Communication for Staff

Our communication guidelines document outlines the communication network of Über den Tellerrand. Our main focus was to provide a simplified and streamlined understanding to the various platforms and their purposes to Über den Tellerrand staff as well as the best way to use those platforms depending on what information they want to share. A major concern staffers had was the **decrease in spontaneous and interpersonal communication** caused by the transition from in-person encounters to an online format. Based on these concerns, this section provides recommendations to maintain interpersonal connection in an online environment, as well as to enhance communication with satellites. As the organization continues to grow, we included recommendations for Über den Tellerrand to create a constant feedback mechanism where staff can gain insights on what the network thinks about events or the organization as a whole. Based on those responses, the organization can strategically adjust its events or structure to best serve its community.

5.1.1 Adopt Kumospace to Foster Spontaneous and One-on-One Communication

From our interviews and focus groups, we found that interpersonal connections among staff had diminished since communication moved online. To facilitate more **spontaneous, one-on-one** communication among staff and other satellites, our team recommends the adoption of a new platform, **Kumospace**, for meetings and informal gatherings.

Kumospace allows users to create a space of up to eight rooms and offers 14 types of rooms to choose from such as a living room, classroom, and diner, seen below in Figure 23. The platform allows users to **move around virtual rooms, engage in individual conversations, and network** with other people in the room through its spatial-audio feature. Kumospace mimics an in-person experience where groups can spontaneously form in different rooms, creating a sense of connection and community. During the Berlin focus group, participants mentioned that they used to have in-person coffee breaks. Since the start of the pandemic, staff members have had difficulty replicating the spontaneity and interpersonal atmosphere of having a coffee break through Slack or Zoom, creating a potential for Kumospace to fill that void.

5.1.2 Create a Space for Virtual Coffee Breaks in Kumospace

We suggest that Über den Tellerrand should create a space on Kumospace dedicated to **coffee breaks**. By having an online space for coffee breaks, staff can easily join at any time by clicking the link, allowing for spontaneity. Additionally, both the spatial-audio feature and the

environment of each room allows for more interpersonal conversations between staff.

Figure 23

Rooms in Kumospace



(Left) Living Room, (Center) Classroom, (Right) Diner

During the satellite focus group, representatives mentioned that Zoom casts a spotlight on the person who is talking, making them feel uncomfortable. Zoom also does not allow for individual conversations unless break out rooms are enabled, reducing spontaneous conversation. By adopting Kumospace, users have the ability to talk to anyone anywhere they want as well as the option to leave a conversation and go somewhere else.

5.1.3 Implement a Set of Communication Guidelines

Currently, Über den Tellerrand does not have clear guidelines to assist in communicating with others online. From our research, we observed a potential for growth in the communication structure, as well as the potential for more clarity regarding the best features to use for each platform. For this reason, we recommend adopting our communication guidelines document to reinforce Über den Tellerrand's communication structure. The document provides a clear breakdown of the **three ingredients** of strong communication, the **main platforms** the organization uses, platform **benefits and limitations**, specific platform **features**, **communication with the various groups** in the organization, as well as ways to foster **stronger connections between satellites**; to ensure that the guidelines fit Über den Tellerrand's mission, each chapter provides suggestions to improve **spontaneous** and **informal conversations** among staff, volunteers, participants, and satellites.

5.1.4 Use Emojis to Overcome Language Barriers

From our focus groups, we learned that non-native German speakers struggle to communicate their thoughts through messaging platforms, but have found that emojis provide context to get messages across despite language barriers. For this reason, we recommend the frequent use of **emojis** when communicating with staff, volunteers, and participants in Slack and

WhatsApp to serve as a universal language tool, as well as to add a personal touch to messages.

5.2 Recommendations for Connecting Über den Tellerrand's Satellites

Although Über den Tellerrand is composed of 40 satellites, the organization works as one team with the mission of eliminating prejudices in society. Hence, despite the challenges of COVID-19, we strongly recommend that Über den Tellerrand **takes greater measures to connect satellites** in order to better achieve its mission. We included a section on motivating online collaboration in our communication guidelines document to encourage more satellite connectivity, and we recommend that Über den Tellerand utilizes these suggestions. This section articulates suggestions on network engagement, so that all satellites can be more connected as one team.

5.2.1 Adopt Miro as a Visual Planning Tool Across All Satellites

During the Berlin focus group, participants mentioned they miss using sticky notes and whiteboards to visualize projects in-person. We learned that the Berlin satellite uses **Miro**, an online collaboration tool to brainstorm ideas and plan events in **real-time**. By using Miro, all staff members can edit a virtual whiteboard with sticky notes, pens, and other planning tools to work on projects. While working on the virtual whiteboard, staff members can meet through the paid version of Miro, through Zoom, or a Kumospace room to improve collaboration among staff members. We recommend that all satellites use Miro to plan events and projects.

5.2.2 Advertise Reasons to Attend the Monthly Zoom Meeting

We recommend that staffers and volunteers across all active satellites attend the **monthly Zoom meeting**. We recommend that Über den Tellerrand take **greater measures to advertise** its monthly Zoom meeting, which can be done through all social media platforms, as well as by sending an email to the entire staff network **at least one week in advance** of the meeting. We recommend that **reasons to attend the meetings** should be specified in the advertisement. For instance, the reasons may include learning about interesting concepts or events at other satellites, meeting new people, or broadening your network.

5.2.3 Encourage Check-ins After Monthly Zoom Meeting

We recommend that all staff members and volunteers who attend the monthly Zoom meeting **follow up with at least one individual** at another satellite. Reaching out to at least one person fosters **more one-on-one connections** across the network, as well as **strengthens connections between satellites**. To simplify the process, we recommend that Über den Tellerrand links a Google Sheet near the end of the monthly Zoom meeting, where staff members can include contact information, as well as information about themselves. Moreover, we recommend that Über den Tellerrand advertises the opportunity to connect one-on-one with another staff member after the Zoom meeting over social media and through email. In the advertisement, we recommend that Über den Tellerrand includes reasons to reach out personally to another staff member they met, which may include receiving new perspectives on completing

particular tasks, checking-in with other satellites, broadening your network, and developing new friendships.

5.2.4 Encourage Satellite Co-Hosted Events

We recommend that Über den Tellerrand encourages satellites to **co-host events** with other satellites. We learned in our satellite focus group that Freiburg and Hamburg co-hosted events with other satellites and found the experience to be advantageous in forming connections and generating new ideas. We encourage Über den Tellerrand to advertise the co-host event model of satellites such as Freiburg and Hamburg to the entire network. Moreover, we learned through our questionnaire that participants want more opportunities to meet people at other satellites. Hence, more satellite co-hosted events would have positive effects for staff members as well as participants.

5.2.5 Encourage Biweekly Check-ins with the Berlin Network Team

We recommend that Über den Tellerrand encourages satellites to **check-in at least every two weeks with the Berlin Network Team**. We learned in our staff focus group that satellite coordinators from Frankfurt and Freiburg met with the Berlin Network Team every two weeks to assess problems and solutions, which was found to be useful in learning strategies used by other satellites. We recommend that every satellite follows a similar check-in method with the Berlin Network Team.

5.2.6 Refine Communication Guidelines in the Future

We recommend that Über den Tellerrand **refine the communication guidelines document** as needed. Checking-in with other satellites allows staff members to learn new ideas regarding enhanced network connectivity. Moreover, by adopting the feedback section of the communication guideline, new ideas and suggestions can further tailor the guidelines document. Overall, we recommend assessing the “**Tools for Online Communication**” and “**Communication in Our Network**” chapters through the lens of the three ingredients of communication, which will **invite opportunities** to continuously enhance satellite connectivity with staff, volunteers, and participants.

5.3 Recommendations for Event Participation

Event participation is a key contributor of the community of Über den Tellerrand. High participation levels show a strong community and make people want to share the Über den Tellerrand community with others, further growing the Über den Tellerrand network. Improving event participation is difficult especially during the pandemic, however a lot can be learned from the successes of various satellites.

5.3.1 Host More Events Across All Satellites

We recommend that satellites **host events more frequently**. In the “Five Years on Integration” survey, the most frequent request from participants was to host “**more events.**”

While we do suggest more frequent events across all satellites, there is also a need to re-evaluate **event types**. We developed a robust understanding that the most popular events among participants were cooking and language cafe events. Moreover, when asked to rank prospective events, “Discussion Night” and the “Walk Buddy Program” were among the options that received strong support; these two prospective events inherently foster interpersonal connections. Therefore, in addition to recommending more events like cooking and language cafes, we suggest that Über den Tellerrand adopts new events that are inherently interpersonal, such as discussion nights. Hosting more events that many participants would be excited about could improve motivation among participants.

Despite the decrease in events at most satellites, there are examples of locations who blossomed in the face of the pandemic. The **Frankfurt** and **Hamburg** satellites increased the number of events held in 2020. We recommend **further analysis** into the techniques and methods utilized by these satellite locations so they can be broadcasted throughout the Über den Tellerrand satellite network. Adoption of Frankfurt and Hamburg event practices for other satellite locations may allow current events to run smoother and increase the number of events held in the future.

5.3.2 Adopt Engagement Techniques from Other Satellites

Two satellites, **Munich** and **Linz**, showed success in **growing their attendance numbers** by 166% and 66%, respectively, in 2020. The format of their outdoor cooking events were desired by participants due to the limited options of socialization caused by the pandemic. We suggest further analysis of the techniques used by these two satellites to operate in-person events. For other satellites not as successful as Munich and Linz, adoption of these techniques can improve their current in-person event structure. In addition, we recommend **dedicating additional resources** to establishing similar events for satellites who do not host events of this type.

From the prosperity experienced by **Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, and Linz** in 2020, the techniques and strategies used to host events can be great resources to improve other satellite locations in the Über den Tellerrand network. Our team recommends Über den Tellerrand to **explore these satellites further** to gain a deeper understanding of the successes they found during the pandemic. By utilizing the knowledge from the success these satellites experienced, other satellite locations can **better use their resources** and **host more effective in-person events** in the future.

5.3.3 Investigate Satellites with Successful In-Person Events

Attendance at both the **Würzburg** and **Grefrath** satellite’s in-person events in 2019 stayed equal to attendance levels at online events during 2020. The other ten satellites all decreased, making Würzburg and Grefrath the top performing satellite locations regarding online events during 2020, which indicates the format of online events at these two satellite locations were well received by their communities. Therefore, we recommend that Über den Tellerrand further analyzes the success of online participation at the Würzburg and Grefrath satellites to aid

in online participation at other satellites.

5.3.4 Experiment with Kumospace for Online Events

In addition to event type and frequency, there need to be other ways to approach the issue of decreased participant motivation for being online. We learned in the satellite focus group that one of the major factors causing the decrease in motivation to participate in events is the “**Zoom spotlight**.” However, we were told by one satellite representative that breakout rooms helped break that motivation barrier and foster more engagement. Therefore, we recommend that online events at Über den Tellerrand **use breakout rooms** more frequently to encourage more personal engagement. Moreover, while we do not recommend abandoning Zoom for hosting online events, we recommend Über den Tellerrand to **experiment with Kumospace for online events that are more interpersonal**, such as discussion nights.

5.3.5 Reassess Social Media Practices

From our questionnaire data, a majority of participants learned about Über den Tellerrand through word of mouth. We recommend Über den Tellerrand to re-evaluate how its staff use social media to make it more engaging to better showcase its community. In addition to the organization’s current social media and branding basics guide, we recommend the implementation of **Facebook and Instagram engagement strategies** to improve engagement. Engagement techniques include asking for comments under posts, using polls, and posting features of individuals in the network to spread their stories and personalities. Additionally, our questionnaire indicated that event advertisement and organizational changes were only done through social media. We recommend Über den Tellerrand also use **other communication channels** such as the newsletter, website, WhatsApp group, and email alias to advertise events. Our communication guidelines address the use of social media branding and offer suggestions on how the organization can keep posts short, visually appealing, and engaging for followers. Social media is an integral tool Über den Tellerrand uses to engage with members and the rest of the world; with a new assessment on how the organization posts, online engagement can improve with emphasis on Über den Tellerrand’s mission.

5.4 Recommendations for Enhancing Feedback at Über den Tellerrand

Our research highlighted the advantageous effects of adopting a strong feedback mechanism in an organization. For Über den Tellerrand, we recommend enhancing the yearly satellite survey, adopting a constant online feedback mechanism, and employing an in-person notebook feedback structure across all satellites.

5.4.1 Enhance the Yearly Satellite Survey

A main component of Über den Tellerrand’s current feedback structure is the yearly satellite survey. Although the satellite survey is advantageous for fostering increased satellite connection, there is potential for growth in this feedback mechanism. More particularly, we noticed that some of the satellites that answered the survey in 2019 did not participate in the

2020 version. In order for Über den Tellerrand to draw clearer comparisons in its yearly satellite analysis, we recommend ensuring that **every active satellite participates** in the yearly feedback survey.

5.4.2 Adopt a Continuous Online Feedback Survey

Adopting a constant feedback mechanism would allow Über den Tellerrand individuals to provide their perspective at any time, through a designated channel. Moreover, a constant feedback system would allow Über den Tellerrand staff, volunteers, and participants to feel more heard and involved, fostering a more close-knit community. Therefore, we recommend the implementation of a constant feedback mechanism. We recommend using Google Forms to receive feedback, as this is the format Über den Tellerrand currently uses for surveys. In the communication guidelines document, we drafted a few example questions that can be used in the survey:

1. What is your role at Über den Tellerrand? (staff, volunteer, or participant)
2. What satellite are you from?
3. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to communication for your satellite?
4. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to communication with other satellites?
5. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to volunteer engagement?
6. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to participant engagement?
7. Please provide any other comments, suggestions, or other feedback in regards to your experience with Über den Tellerrand.

We recommend linking the constant feedback survey at the end of each online event in the Zoom chat, to ensure that participants have their voices heard.

5.4.3 Translate the Continuous Feedback Survey to Most Prevalent Languages

One challenge with the feedback mechanism will be **language barriers**. Since the organization has a growing multilingual network, we recommend translating the constant feedback form to **German, Arabic**, and any other languages with a significant presence in Über den Tellerrand. When distributing its current feedback form, Über den Tellerrand uses a variety of platforms, so multiple languages will work to its advantage. The organization can share the feedback form on WhatsApp, Facebook, Slack, and the website. By making the feedback form easy to access, we anticipate for it to generate a significant number of responses from attendees.

5.4.4 Implement an In-Person Feedback Notebook

Some satellites employ an in-person event feedback system by having attendees share perspectives in a notebook on events, as well as organizational structure of the satellites

regarding communication and planning. We recommend encouraging all satellites able to host in-person events to adopt the **notebook feedback structure**. The notebook feedback mechanism will help Über den Tellerrand stay in touch with what participants and volunteers think about the organization and events hosted. With this feedback, Über den Tellerrand can refine events or the communication structure.

5.5 Recommendations Summary

Our recommendations for Über den Tellerrand focus on enhancing communication for staff, connecting Über den Tellerrand satellites, increasing event participation, and encouraging feedback. Together these recommendations promote the three ingredients for strong communication: fostering one-on-one connections, motivating others to collaborate, and creating spaces for feedback. Moreover, we anticipate that adopting these recommendations will allow Über den Tellerrand to maintain connections in its network, as well as grow its community in a post-pandemic world.

6.0 Conclusions

Über den Tellerrand plays an important role in bringing people together. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization continues to achieve its mission of creating a more inclusive society where various cultures interact and connect with each other. Our Interactive Qualifying Project will allow Über den Tellerrand to strengthen connections between individuals and satellites, helping the organization achieve its mission as one team. Moreover, our project will supply Über den Tellerrand with the tools necessary to continue growing its network in a new online setting. Our recommendations and deliverables provide Über den Tellerrand with a **centralized communication document** to more easily facilitate **communication among staff, volunteers, and participants**, as well as strategies to foster **more network participation and engagement**. Further research regarding online platforms and communication strategies will provide Über den Tellerrand with opportunities to continue enhancing its online network engagement strategies.

Throughout the project, we learned about the challenges regarding online communication and engagement, as well as tools and communication methods for hosting more engaging events and interactions online. In addition to the profound learning experience this project has offered, we hope our work will eventually guide other NGOs similar to Über den Tellerrand to create a stronger online presence, where they will be equipped to communicate, network, and expand their communities. Über den Tellerrand and similar NGOs will then be better equipped with communication tools to achieve their mission of helping displaced people adapt to a new environment, thus creating a more inclusive and tolerant society.

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Appendix A: Sponsor Description

Über den Tellerrand, the German expression for “beyond the edge of the plate” is an NGO centered around creating an open and tolerant society. Über den Tellerrand’s origin story began in 2012 after the suicide of Muhammed Rahsapar, an Iranian refugee located at a refugee camp in Würzburg. Other refugees at the Würzburg camp set off to Berlin in a protest march against the isolation and discriminative laws the German government was imposing on them. Along the 600km route, the march visited other refugee camps and invited them to join their protest (Refugee Movement, 2015). After arriving in Berlin while gaining support along the journey, refugees set up a protest camp at Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg. It was here at Oranienplatz where German citizens engaged with refugees through cooking and sharing meals together. Über den Tellerrand formed shortly after, giving refugees a place to cook meals, share stories, and connect with civilians in ways that were previously not possible.

Using the recipes shared from cooking at Oranienplatz, Über den Tellerrand published *Eine Prise Heimat (A Pinch of Home)* in 2016 featuring traditional recipes and personal refugee stories (Über den Tellerrand, 2021). The cookbook became very successful, received a prize from the Free University of Berlin, and went on to become popular nationwide. After receiving nationwide attention, Über den Tellerrand became well-known for its mission of bringing communities together through various activities, such as cooking and language events. The overarching purpose of bringing people from all walks of life together is to break down mutual prejudices, as well as create a more open-minded and inclusive community. The greater goal is to create a worldwide network which supports an open and more tolerant society.

After starting in 2013, Über den Tellerrand branched out to 40 cities around the world. Each community is called a satellite; while most satellites are located in Germany, the organization also has sites in Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Colombia and the United States. Across Germany, Über den Tellerrand has 300 volunteers among its satellites and completed 190 activities in 2019 alone. At the organization’s Frankfurt location, newcomers can spend six months working with refugees and residents to generate ideas and create a program to help the community. Examples of programs include a sports group, blog, or another cooking event; there are no limits as to what the program must be. Über den Tellerrand is continually growing its number of satellite locations, since the programs have amassed such a strong following. Visitors on the Über den Tellerrand website are even encouraged to launch their own satellite if one is not already available in their location. Furthermore, Über den Tellerrand has many organizations who support its mission. Hans Sauer Stiftung, BioInsel Naturkost, IKEA Stiftung, Fritz-kola, and many other European foundations have all worked with Über den Tellerrand in the past. Engagement from other organizations has contributed to the organization’s rapid growth. In 2016, Über den Tellerrand generated 282,181 euros of income and spent 279,145 euros. Only three years later, they have grown to 955,828 euros of income with 881,731 euros in expenditures. With its growth nearly quadrupling in only three years, Über den Tellerrand has created a sustainable platform to prosper in the future.

At the various Über den Tellerrand locations, activities center around personal connection and team building. Specifically, at the Kitchen Hub in Berlin, people can cook, garden, beekeep, make music, and study language every day. Cooking is Über den Tellerand's largest activity; with guidance from chefs, members are taught how to perfect a traditional three-course menu. In 2019, the organization offered 55 intercultural cooking courses led by Syrian and Afghan cooks, with 800 participants. Über den Tellerand currently offers booking vouchers for Syrian cooking activities. However, the class cannot take place due to COVID-19 restrictions. The organization also ran a project called Kitchen on the Run; volunteers installed a small kitchen in a shipping container and toured it around Germany, meeting 2,300 people from 41 different nations. Overall, Kitchen on the Run held 49 cooking events and 25 open community events.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, Über den Tellerrand found alternative methods to operate with the restrictions such as hosting a language cafe every Monday night where people of all language levels can converse about different topics. Another online activity is a weekly dance party on Friday nights, which attendees can join via Zoom. Members can dress up and practice dancing with people of all dance levels. Additional activities that started due to the pandemic are online cooking classes, where chef Yaser teaches directly via Zoom, and anyone participating can follow along in their own kitchen. There is also an ingredient list available online in order to prepare beforehand, but the class includes all necessary instructions to make a tasty meal. Über den Tellerand's satellite locations offer similar programs with the focus around cooking. The specific dishes currently being taught may be different, however, the overall message of friendship and unity are all at the foundation of each activity.

Über den Tellerrand is the organization it is today due its recipes of success, which focus on promoting unity and creating a safe space for people to be themselves, learn new cultures, and share experiences. The organization's ten key points from cooking to communication and openness all focus on the notion of uniting people from different walks of life. This perspective brings us to the project problem. Über den Tellerrand seeks to maintain their key recipes for successes while following COVID-19 protocols which temporarily shut down in-person events. Hence, the main challenge is to find a way to maintain the organization's key points in an online setting.

Due to the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, Über den Tellerrand has not been able to host its normal activities that promote cultural diversity, unity, and inclusion. Although most events have transitioned online, the network has experienced difficulty maintaining communication and engagement from its staff, volunteers, participants, and community members across its many locations. The decrease in involvement has raised concern for the organization's success and outreach in the future. Until there are no more social distancing requirements in place, Über den Tellerrand has to conduct online events that are attractive and engaging. Since many of its previous in-person events were very hands-on and collaboration oriented, it has been challenging to transition towards an online format. Accordingly, new online events have been formed but have not attracted as many newcomers as they had hoped. As a result, the organization is looking to strengthen its communication and create alternative events to promote involvement. Without

participation from volunteers and newcomers, the organization is unable to accomplish its mission of restoring a sense of unity, inclusion, and community throughout the Über den Tellerrand global network.

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Similar Organizations

Preamble: Hello, we are a group of students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute working on a project with Über den Tellerrand to enhance networking and communication in a post-pandemic world. We are hoping to gain valuable insight from various organizations to help us better understand adaptation strategies amidst the pandemic. We appreciate you taking time to answer our questions. My name is {insert name} and I will be leading this interview. My name is {insert name} and I will be taking notes throughout the interview. We would like to clarify that if at any moment you would like us to end the interview for whatever reason, let us know and we will conclude the interview. If we decide to use any information from this interview in our final report, we will give you the opportunity to review the materials prior to the publication. You may also choose to remain anonymous. Do we have permission to record this meeting? The recording will only be used to validate our notes. May we proceed?

1) Introductions and Pre-COVID-19:

Welcome! We're so excited to have this opportunity, thank you for your time. We can start by introducing ourselves. (Introduce group).

- Would you please introduce yourself and your role at the organization?
- How did your organization communicate necessary information to members and staff before the pandemic?
- Why is it important for your organization to communicate between staff, members, and other people?

2) Communication during COVID-19:

- What challenges has your team experienced since meetings/events/courses were transitioned online?
 - Have you seen a difference in participation? (Increase? Decrease?)
- How do you currently communicate necessary information to members and staff?
 - Do you find this method of communication to be effective? Why or why not?
 - Does your organization use standard operating procedures?
- How do you currently communicate necessary information to volunteers?
 - Do you find this method of communication to be effective? Why or why not?
- What online platforms has your organization found to be most useful to communicate?
- What strategies have you utilized to reach new people and grow your organization after the pandemic?

Appendix C: Questionnaire for Über den Tellerrand

Participants

Preamble: This survey is completely anonymous, and we will not record any personal information. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to skip any questions you wish not to answer. This survey should not take more than 5 minutes of your time.

1) How old are you?

- A. Younger than 18
- B. 18-27
- C. 28-35
- D. 36-50
- E. Older than 50

2) What is your gender?

- Your Response:

3) What is your country of origin?

- Your Response:

4) How long have you lived in Germany?

- A. Does not apply to me
- B. Less than 1 year
- C. 1-3 years
- D. Over 3 years
- E. My Entire Life

5) When did you first learn about ÜdT?

- A. 2014
- B. 2015
- C. 2016
- D. 2017
- E. 2018
- F. 2020
- G. 2021

- 6) How did you hear about ÜdT?
- A. Social Media
 - B. ÜdT Website
 - C. Friend Referral
 - D. Newspaper
 - E. Other (please list: _____)
- 7) How many online ÜdT events have you attended since the start of the pandemic?
- A. None
 - B. 1
 - C. 2-5
 - D. 6-9
 - E. 10 or more
- 8) Which of the following platforms do you use to learn about ÜdT events? Please check all that apply:
- A. Facebook
 - B. Instagram
 - C. WhatsApp
 - D. Signal
 - E. ÜdT Website
 - F. Other (please specify):
- 9) How often did you engage with participants in the few minutes before events prior to the pandemic?
- A. Always
 - B. Often
 - C. Sometimes
 - D. Rarely
 - E. Never
- 10) How often did you engage with participants outside of ÜdT?
- A. Always
 - B. Often
 - C. Sometimes
 - D. Rarely
 - E. Never

11) How often do you engage with participants outside of ÜdT events during the pandemic?

- F. Always
- G. Often
- H. Sometimes
- I. Rarely
- J. Never

12) Which of the following online platforms are you comfortable with? Please check all that apply:

- A. Zoom
- B. Slack
- C. Discord
- D. Spatial Chat
- E. Facebook Messenger
- F. Microsoft Teams
- G. Google Meet
- H. Whatsapp
- I. Signal
- J. GroupMe

13) Are there any online platforms you would recommend ÜdT to try out?

- Your Response:

14) Rank the following type of events in terms of preference (1= most favorite, 5= least favorite).

	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking Event					
Dance Event					
Game Event					
Language Cafe					
Professional Networking/Jobs Event					

15) Please signify your interest in the following prospective events (1= most interesting, 10= least interesting).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Arts & Crafts										
Cooking/Baking Competition Event										
Discussion Night										
Mental Well-Being Event										
Music Lessons										
Scavenger Hunt										
Talent Show										
TED Talk										
Video Game Tournament										
Walk Buddy Program										

16) Which of the following has been the most challenging for you?

Please identify which of the following barriers have impacted your participation/engagement in ÜdT's online events (1=most challenging, 5= least challenging).

	1	2	3	4	5
Access to internet/technology					
Uncomfortable using online tools (such as Zoom)					
Lack of will to participate online					
Mental health (not wanting to be around others)					
Uninterested in activities					

17) What in particular do you believe ÜdT can do better to enhance your online experiences with the organization?

18) Generally, how has your experience been with communication online with other participants, volunteers, and staff?

Appendix D: Questions for Über den Tellerrand Staff Focus Group

Preamble: We appreciate you taking time to answer our questions. My name is {insert name} and I will be leading this focus group. My name is {insert name} and I will be taking notes throughout the focus group. We would like to clarify that if at any moment you would like to stop participating, you may leave the Zoom call. If we decide to use any information from this focus group in our final report, we will give you the opportunity to review the materials prior to the publication. You may also choose to remain anonymous. Do we have permission to record this meeting? The recording will only be used to validate our notes. This session will take no more than 1 hour. May we proceed?

Anonymous: Yes __, No __

Recorded: Yes __, No __

1) Introductory Questions:

Welcome everyone! We're so excited to have this opportunity. Thank you for your time. To get to know each other a little more, we would like to start with an ice-breaker. We can begin by having everyone share your name, where you're from, how long you have been at Über den Tellerrand, as well as an interesting fact about yourself.

MISSION

- What goals do you strive to achieve with each event you host?

2) Exploration Questions:

PRE-COVID-19

- Could you please discuss your communication structure before the pandemic between staff, volunteers, and participants?

COVID-19/BACKGROUND

- How has COVID-19 affected your interactions with other staff members? With volunteers? With participants?
- Has COVID-19 made you question whether ÜdT can achieve its goals remotely?

COMMUNICATION DURING COVID-19

- Could you please discuss your experience with online communication with other staff members since the start of the pandemic?
 - What are some of the challenges you face in communicating with staff?

- Could you please discuss your experience with online communication with volunteers since the start of the pandemic?
 - Why is it important for you to be in touch with volunteers?
- Could you please discuss your experience with online communication with participants since the start of the pandemic?
 - Why is it important for you to be in touch with participants?
- Could you please discuss your experience with online communication with other satellites since the start of the pandemic?
 - Why is it important for you to be in touch with other satellites?
- Could you please discuss any shortcomings or issues with Zoom when hosting events?
- Could you please discuss the effectiveness of Slack as an online platform used to communicate?
- Could you please discuss any other online platforms you have used to communicate in the organization?

3) Exit Questions:

- Is there anything we missed you'd like to discuss more?
- Is there anything else we should know regarding the topics we have discussed?
- Would you like to tell us anything or provide recommendations to look into?

Appendix E: Questions for Über den Tellerrand Satellite

Focus Group

Preamble

We appreciate you taking time to answer our questions. My name is {insert name} and I will be leading this focus group. My name is {insert name} and I will be taking notes throughout the focus group. To better acquaint ourselves, we are a group of undergraduate students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the United States working with Über den Tellerrand on a project that aims to foster more networking, communication, and community engagement in your organization across all satellites. Our progress and research so far has led us to working on a communication guidelines document that includes communication practices, recommendations, and suggestions. We hope to ask you some questions in order to understand more about Über den Tellerrand. If at any moment you would like to stop participating, you may leave the Zoom call. If we decide to use any information from this focus group in our final report, we will give you the opportunity to review the materials prior to the publication. You may also choose to remain anonymous. Do we have permission to record this meeting? The recording will only be used to validate our notes. This session will take no more than 1 hour. May we proceed?

Anonymous: Yes __, No __

Recorded: Yes __, No __

1) Introductions

Welcome everyone! We're so excited to have this opportunity, thank you for your time. To get to know each other a little more, we would like to start with an ice-breaker. We can begin by having everyone share your name, what satellite you are from, how long you have been at ÜdT, and if you could be any food, what food would you be.

2) Exploration Questions

Satellite Questions

- Could you please discuss how many events your satellite hosted in the past year?
- If your satellite hosted in-person events, what was that process like?
- How was participation in your satellite's events in the past year?
- What engagement techniques have you used to improve participation on social media and/or Zoom events?
- What do you feel is the biggest barrier to growing the network? (volunteers and reaching refugees)

Communication

- How often do you engage as a network? (i.e. with other satellites)
- Do you feel that satellites should meet more frequently?
- How do you communicate with volunteers?
- How do you communicate with participants?
- Do you feel there is a need for more interpersonal communication since the start of the pandemic?

Slack

- How is your Slack structured? What channels exist in your Slack?
- What sort of language is used over Slack (informal/formal)?
- Who do you message on Slack?
- What do you communicate over Slack?

WhatsApp

- What do you communicate over WhatsApp?
- Who do you message using WhatsApp?
- Do you feel WhatsApp has been effective in communicating?

Email

- How do you communicate using Email?
- What do you communicate over Email?

Feedback

- What kind of feedback do you lack?
- How could informal feedback be documented and shared?
- What role do language and/or different personal/cultural approaches to feedback play?

3) Exit Questions:

- Is there anything we didn't touch on that you believe we should know?
- Is there something you wanted to say previously but didn't get the chance to?
- Would you like to tell us anything or provide recommendations to look into?

Appendix F: Angels-Net Foundation Interview Coding

Themes	Quotes
1. Interpersonal Connection	<p>"Personal/Interpersonal" x6</p> <p>"One on one" x8</p> <p>"Team" x3 → "We act as a team;" "we're a strong team;" "my team"</p> <p>"Staff members, our board members, all of us we, we're very very hands on, and very integrated, so we work as one."</p> <p>"There's a lot of people who communicate interpersonally."</p> <p>"Those who don't have technology visit other people who do have technology and, you know, hope, using distance and things of that nature, hopefully, but they will come."</p>
2. Adaptability	<p>"We had to figure out a way that would keep us safe."</p> <p>"So we stopped for a minute and to think about this in another way."</p> <p>"We looked at that and said okay..."</p> <p>"...which is something we had not done previously..."</p> <p>"Learned x6 → "I learned how to use Zoom;" "we all learned how to use Zoom;" "I had to learn Zoom, so I attended Zoom training;" "I just learned about WhatsApp...I did not know anything about WhatsApp; I had to learn it...I'm still learning WhatsApp."</p> <p>"I think that actually we can come up with ways that can be more permanent and how we can communicate."</p> <p>"So, using Zoom really made it easier for them to interact with us. And I think this is going to be a big part of our community going forward."</p> <p>"A lot of work is continuously going to be done in this way."</p> <p>"People have taken on different roles within the organization."</p>
3. Exciting the Group/Organization about Change	<p>"And one of the things that with change management is that you have to involve your team in getting that change to occur."</p> <p>"Wow, I'm excited about the transition and make sure they understand it's not as difficult as it might seem to them, and that going the old ways you can incorporate some of the old ways with doing some of the new"</p>

	<p>things.” --> “if they don't understand that they will think they will hands up, they'll just give up.”</p> <p>”You know even learning those things, so learning the various apparatuses that are out there that can help and getting the staff excited about those changes.” → “it's very important.”</p> <p>”So that would be the advice that I would give nonprofits: sometimes you can't do the same old thing.”</p>
<p>4. Clear Purpose Behind Platforms</p>	<p>“Zoom” x10 → ex: “we really started using Zoom a lot”</p> <p>“Email” x3</p> <p>“WhatsApp” x11 → “But I think it's more texting with WhatsApp, because that's where things are going face-to-face. With four minutes on the website, it's static. But I think the WhatsApp and the texting has been very helpful”</p> <p>”We have a website, and we have Facebook.”</p> <p>”We've been using a lot of marketing online and then on the website it's been the website, the Facebook, it's been, you know, follow up, we've done a lot of follow up and we find out, like on, like if you're watching spectrum one”</p>

Appendix G: Goethe-Institut Interview Coding

Themes	Quotes
1. Interpersonal Connection	<p>“The external communication is really crucial because all the work that we do is about reaching reaching others we're not doing the kind of language advocacy work just for ourselves but part of our mission is to really foster and engagement with German language and culture, amongst young learners but also adult learners so communication is really key if people don't know that we exist in what we do, then they can be part of our programming so we actually talking think a lot about communication”</p> <p>“Ever since the pandemic started, I myself have had a lot more meetings than before because it just seems like people want to be in touch more and check-in with each other to see how things are going.”</p> <p>“Yeah, I'm sure, because you're not having that informal day to day conversations with your co workers that you want to exactly because you don't have like those short conversations with, you know the coffee maker or something like that”</p> <p>“Just happens when you're in a building that doesn't exist anymore so we just have to make sure that we purposefully create those moments to check in with each other.”</p>
2. Adaptability	<p>“German food blogger so rather than just having an announcement this project is coming up; the food blogger from Germany did a little video where she introduced a project and herself and that of course, creates more attention than just like a little announcement next month.”</p> <p>“Information but just having something exciting that people actually want to look at like videos of artists or.”</p> <p>“I think that's an excellent point creating some sort of feedback mechanism.”</p>
3. Exciting the Group/Organization about Change	<p>“They're a little more innovative, but since people don't know those platforms, you have to invest more time in training the users on how to use those platforms.”</p> <p>“And I found when people understand why you're proposing let's say Remo instead of Zoom, that there is sort of a bad tactical pedagogical value in it or it makes networking more seamless than, then people usually willing to look into it so the first part is...number two is you have</p>

	<p>to be willing to train your staff, and possibly even the participants of the event.”</p>
<p>4. Clear Purpose Behind Platforms</p>	<p>“There needs to be a very specific reason and a purpose for choosing a platform.</p> <p>“We should never pick any platform just because it's a cool platform and not every platform works for the same kind of events so just having a very, being able to make a case for why you choose that platform is point number one point.</p> <p>“For social media, of course, Facebook primarily but also, Instagram, Twitter to a lesser extent, but I think the biggest change probably has been that traveling that is not happening anymore; being present at the schools and talking about what the Goethe-Institut is and does that that has changed for sure.”</p> <p>“Platforms like Microsoft Teams where we can store information with chats and things like that.”</p> <p>“While Zoom is not particularly innovative, it's stable and easy to use.”</p> <p>“Remo for online virtual events.”</p> <p>“We have like a communications plan where we kind of plan our social media strategy for a month to say like on these days we advertise courses on other days we talk about programming.”</p> <p>“We have a weekly newsletter; we had that before the pandemic and we're still doing that.”</p>

Appendix H: ACE Interview Coding

Themes	Quotes
1. Interpersonal Connection	<p>“In person, meetings are a little more productive because you get to have a better feel for how a person really is thinking and feeling about a certain issue that just doesn't get communicated over Zoom.”</p>
2. Adaptability	<p>“And then during the winter time, we found a location where we could do a small group on Saturday mornings and afternoons, but we've reduced the size of the group considerably.”</p> <p>“A couple months ago, the Operations Director went through the handbook and updated some of the information in there, based on the changes with the pandemic; “we're constantly reviewing it.””</p> <p>“We're starting something new with our outreach department, which is setting up groups that are language based; they're WhatsApp groups that are based on languages, so we have one for French, one for Rwanda, one for Swahili, and one for Burundi. So, when we need to communicate to anybody in those groups, we can communicate to the leader of that group, and then they can put a WhatsApp message out in that language. For example, information about the vaccine has been going out that way. We call these language circles, and they have been really helpful in communicating with people who do not speak English. Language barriers are definitely something that we experience; it's difficult to distribute information when not everyone speaks the same language.” → creating a new strategy to address language barrier</p>
3. Clear Purpose Behind Platforms	<p>“I'll have a better chance of receiving a response using WhatsApp, so it's just about trying all different options that you have, it's better to have more options.” → useful to have multiple options for online communication</p> <p>“There's a lot more sharing of documents through Google Docs than we did prior to the pandemic.”</p> <p>“Primarily through Google Meets or Zoom.” (for online meetings) We have a lot of our staff meetings via Google Meets.” → x6 Zoom & Google Meets</p> <p>“In communicating with the clients, outreach often uses WhatsApp. I use WhatsApp as well, to get in touch with students. It was really good.”</p> <p>“We use zoom for the programming though because it allows breakout rooms and a little more flexibility than Google Meets. And it's a lot</p>

	<p>easier to share your screen, especially when kids are doing their homework with the volunteers and the tutors. So Zoom allows easier screen sharing to help the kids do their homework than Google Meets does.” → Clear reason given to use Zoom in programming</p> <p>“I think it's a good thing because if you can't reach them on one message if you can't reach them on one app and maybe you can try another one; for example if most of the time if I can reach a student via text or email.”</p> <p>“And then also another way of growing organization I would say social media or Instagram or Twitter or Facebook; whenever our marketing team makes a program update many of us can share it onto our personal network, and then that will help us grow our organization.</p>
<p>4. Standardized Procedures</p>	<p>“We have an employee handbook we follow.”</p> <p>“And we have a procedure where we go through our marketing person basically to do all that kind of posting and outreach.”</p> <p>“We do have certain procedures and it's all documented in our employee manual.”</p>

Appendix I: Berlin Staff Focus Group Coding

Themes	Quotes
<p>1. Decrease in Interpersonal Communication</p>	<p>“Bringing across motivation and some positivity in very difficult times is just becoming increasingly difficult only through the channels of social media.”</p> <p>“We would like to have our project plans visualized in a better way. We miss kind of standing in front of the whiteboard and shuffling things around.</p> <p>“Communicating via Slack.. it is also time consuming...it is difficult to pull knowledge efficiently and finish tasks.”</p> <p>“Since we don't have a lot of informal meetings anymore, of the five people you see here, besides me, I have only seen one person in person.”</p> <p>“You have to set up an appointment on Outlook and then Zoom and then you talk about it on Slack and then you communicate with someone on WhatsApp about this, so it's it's a lot of that and I think that's where a lot of time and energy goes into, and also maybe to share files and stuff like that.”</p> <p>“...bringing across motivation and positivity is very difficult at times; it's just becoming increasingly difficult, just only through the channels of social media so that that is something that has been very frustrating.”</p> <p>“If you can meet on a personal level, you have a broader variety when it comes to communication. I mean communication is not only verbal communication, but then it's also I mean getting in touch for shared activities.”</p> <p>“We have seen[participants] interacting less and less.”</p>
<p>2. Decrease in Spontaneous Communication</p>	<p>“What we have seen is sitting in the same room, having spontaneous talk really creates better bonding between staff members than staring at a screen all day.”</p> <p>“One of the main issues is that we don't have an integrated software; it's mainly the switching between different things that also doesn't allow for spontaneity.”</p> <p>“And there are tools, and of course there are digital whiteboards but, yeah, as you said, it's also something more spontaneous and also I feel</p>

	<p>that it has a sense of gratification.”</p> <p>“The spontaneity is a main factor that is missing”</p>
<p>3. Confusion with Communication Platforms</p>	<p>“People are talking to us on Instagram and Facebook so they're always various sounds on my laptop coming from different platforms, so that can sometimes be a bit overwhelming so you know you got a message but where did I get it?.”</p> <p>“...so it's quite a lot...too much; a better structure would be if you would have like one tool for communication.”</p> <p>“I'm completely overwhelmed by Slack, because it's too many channels, and in two different groups: one for Berlin and one for the general team.”</p> <p>“I always remember someone wrote something, and I have difficulties finding it; so you have to really be focused and try to answer everything that needs to be done and do it quickly; otherwise we'll have problems and it gets lost in this huge black hole.”</p> <p>“It is a bit inconvenient to always change the platform.”</p> <p>“Sometimes there are misunderstandings through Slack because it is informal.”</p> <p>“You are either on top of Slack or running behind it.”</p>

Appendix J: Satellite Focus Group Coding

Themes	Quotes
1. In-Person Events	<p>Frankfurt: couldn't do things inside our event room, so we made everything outside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - picnics - had sewing campaign - volunteers sewed face masks with our logo on them - head tailor taught others how to sew the mask - small group of like five people - made a lot of masks, so that was also a cool initiative from the volunteers <p>Cologne: not many online events; most events were in summer [in person]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - kitchen on a bicycle that you can cook outside with made it easier to do in-person events and especially to do in-person cooking events, because we were able to cook in smaller groups outside - also had cooperation with Deutsche Bahn. So we had two people who worked a few hours a week for us and we were able to do a lot of events during this short time <p>Berlin 1: [Süchteln] mostly had outdoor events, because [participants] don't want to do something online</p> <p>Berlin 2: every year we have this Congress, where we invite people from all satellites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - had some workshops indoors <p>Hamburg: lot of events outdoors: cooking, picnic, dancing, talking, hiking</p>
2. Online Events	<p>Hamburg: lots of online events; best were the online cooking classes: somebody cooking at home and the others participate at the same time</p> <p>Frankfurt: had language cafes to practice German and gaming nights (most successful events)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could not get cooking events to work
3. German COVID-19	<p>Cologne: [2020] restrictions weren't that rigid - everything without face masks</p>

<p>Protocols</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small number of groups (10-15 people) - rate of infection was quite low - had a list of names and contact information - had disinfection things <p>Freiburg: every satellite had registration sheets, so we could do the contact tracing and see who was there at the events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sign sheet with contact info - have the contacts to email <p>Berlin 2: sewed masks not allowed anymore - need medical masks in Germany</p>
<p>4. Challenges of Online Events</p>	<p>Hamburg: difficult to really talk; I think people are more afraid to talk if it's online; very different from regular in-person events</p> <p>Berlin 3: not easy to motivate people to be active in different activities, because mainly they are online and people are so tired of visiting each other online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writing to each other or visiting each other via Zoom or other is not really like visiting each other in person never ever - energy which is involved is not the same - six months ago it was easier to motivate them to take part in different activities online but nowadays is not that easy because they like to know people and to be activated in live activities and not always online - refugees who are in shelters don't have the possibility to have a very high speed internet connection or they have problems coming [to events]. It is really a big barrier for them and for us, it's a big challenge to motivate them and find you know solutions to let them be with us <p>Freiburg: you're always in the spotlight on Zoom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no way to escape - everybody can look at you - always sitting down and the focus is most of the time on each person's face, whereas if you're meeting in person then everybody has the chance to disappear if they don't want to engage in a conversation
<p>5. Online Engagement Techniques</p>	<p>Hamburg: breakout sessions made it easier to talk to each other</p> <p>Freiburg: warm up activities that a lot of cities came up with at the beginning of any event would have a tiny getting to know each other</p>

	<p>session (most successful technique used by Über den Tellerrand for online events)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asking questions about personal stuff or using a personal item that you have at home, showing it to people, explaining what it had to do with a certain question, and so on. <p>A couple of cities including Freiburg had campaigns in which we would say "Hey, comment under this picture and then you'll get a cookbook from us or a tote bag." - raised awareness and brought more engagement for our satellite</p>
<p>6. Decrease in interpersonal connection</p>	<p>Cologne: volunteers don't know anyone in the group and don't really know [their] place in the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very difficult to find your task, how you can help out the group, and how you can participate, without getting to know the other people <p>Berlin 2: Something else that comes to my mind that we discussed last year quite a lot is that WhatsApp can be tricky if you haven't met in person. I remember that there's like a few of us started and the pandemic hit pretty much directly afterwards. It was a bit easier for those who already knew the people in person to then reach out to have engagement within the groups. I don't even know if this is the exact reason why it was like that but it looks like it because everyone who knew people before in person was able to to keep the relationship going kind of also via WhatsApp, whereas if you didn't have that personal connection, it was really hard, and it was sometimes that you would write into a group or you would post and they would not be a lot of reaction, and that would then result in frustration</p> <p>It's this social media vastness that you shout into the room and nothing comes back, and then it's also awkward because how do you react to that?</p> <p>Berlin 3: I must say that I have been faced with the same problem because I started my job in the time of pandemic. I never had the chance of visiting many volunteers in person. It was not that easy to communicate with them via WhatsApp, and although we try to have an online meeting every month or every two weeks via Zoom, it's not the same. I have the same feeling that most of them don't have a personal connection with me somehow. That is the case also in Berlin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's been more people but when you speak with just one person and it's one-on-one and it's an online event, it's also more

	<p>helpful to get to know each other. [Freiburg] said this very well, that when you speak, and you have the feeling that someone in the corner is staring at you, it makes you nervous, but when you are speaking with one person, face-to-face, it is much easier and it makes you feel more comfortable. You can also go into deeper conversation of course and sometimes even go through some personal issues. In my experience when I have this opportunity to speak with our volunteers, online but also face-to-face, via Zoom, it was a kind of ice breaking issue to make this relationship closer somehow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - And as I said I started my job during the pandemic so it was not so easy to have one-on-one visiting offline, so, we needed it to do some sort of person in-person meetings via Zoom. <p>Freiburg: Regarding the language issue, I think these one-on-one meetings are really good for people who are not native speakers. I speak from my own experience. I'm not a big fan of spotlight them and I have the feeling that 10 other people are listening to my not very perfect German, and then I'm more self conscious about it. I think every time I had one-on-one meetings with other people, even if they're from different countries, it was a more comfortable experience for me and the German that I spoke naturally got better so I can imagine that it is the case where other people who are not a native speaker of a language.</p>
<p>7. Challenges Regarding Language</p>	<p>Freiburg: I find it personally very difficult that you always have to sit and stare at a screen and be stared at in return. And that makes people uncomfortable, I think, especially people who are not native speakers, not native German speakers.</p> <p>Berlin 2: Like [Freiburg] said, it doesn't even matter if it's cultural or personal but within our network there's definitely different language capacities and not kind of in a hierarchy, but just because not everyone speaks everyone's languages. We have to or we chose to come together in German and because it's the language of this country where we do the activities but of course, everyone knows that it's obviously not everyone's mother tongue.</p> <p>It's also not the language that everyone is most comfortable in. And we've seen the problem that also in English, we exclude people. There are some colleagues who are not present here because they could not participate in English so really language is something that is very relevant when we think about feedback.</p>

	<p>I believe that you only give honest feedback, if you think that you can express yourself, well and in a way that won't hurt the other person, and also where you can be really precise.</p> <p>So it's kind of a sensitive issue and that's something that makes it even more difficult to collect everyone's feedback equally. Sometimes we also have a lot of feedback from people who like to give feedback and who are very comfortable in German, but it's not really balanced if you look at the whole network. So there's this overlap of feedback from one side, if you want to make sides, but you know I mean like certain characters.</p>
<p>8. Satellite Networking</p>	<p>Freiburg: co-hosted the events with another city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [satellites] meet up very often online, every two weeks. - all the coordinators get together and discuss what's up in every city, how everybody's feeling about the current situation, problems and solutions, and if you have questions for Marieke or other people - sometimes a satellite does something that another one is interested in, so we sometimes also have separate meetings - If you want to organize something together or have an event together or if you want to use each other's experiences, for example I've been in touch with [Frankfurt], a couple of times about an issue that we were having because we were working on the same project - almost every day and every week we're in touch with each other via message or online meetings <p>Hamburg: lots of online events with other satellites</p> <p>Berlin 1: from the Safir perspective, we have also met every two weeks; are a smaller group with more contact, but a big Zoom connection is every two or three months</p> <p>Frankfurt: for our group for our project I think we meet quite frequently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very helpful because we exchange information like tips and we keep Marieke posted because she's our head organizer/coordinator. - I think [other satellites] also meet frequently with [Berlin Participant 1] and [other Berlin staff members (Victoria)]. <p>Berlin 2: changed the frequency [of our meetings]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - before it was only once a month - started to see each other more often during Corona

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - during the summer months, we saw each other less, again, because there were holidays and more of a regular life - at the beginning of this year, we had a discussion about what would be a good frequency to meet in our group - decided it would be nice to meet more often, but for shorter times because before we had meetings of about one and a half hours or so - had the idea to have 45 minutes, but I negotiated for an hour
<p>9. Feedback</p>	<p>Berlin 3: I got a question via Slack to give my feedback about some colleagues and it was very interesting. At the same time we have always had the opportunity to ask for or to make some sort of one-to-one meetings and share with each other. Whatever we think about each other, how we can build up our projects, and also what are our wishes. It's very useful in terms of communicating with our colleagues, and at the same time for our events at the end of each event or in our meetings we have some check-in questions at the end where everybody can freely give feedback about how they feel, what they wish, and so on so forth.</p> <p>And in our events also at the end, we have always the check-in question and people can always really give us their feedback. So that's what we do.</p> <p>Freiburg: they had this notebook on the table when we had in person events that everybody had access to that notebook and they could write what they thought of that event, what could be done better, and what they enjoyed.</p> <p>I think throughout our network it's not only limited to those yearly surveys. We've had a couple of surveys, I think ever since the pandemic started in which we had to interview a couple of people who participated in the events, which we had to ask questions from the people who used to com to the events very often, very regularly, but they don't come to the online events, and what is the reason, what can we do to make it better, what can we do to make it more appealing to them. We would take notes and then share the results with the whole network. And on top of that there were also a couple of surveys going around that we asked people to fill out. That was mostly regarding the pandemic, how we can improve everything, and why it is difficult for people to get together online now.</p> <p>Frankfurt: sometimes after events we ask people, especially in online events because there's the risk that they would be boring, because you know it's online.</p> <p>We ask them: How can we make this better? How can we make this more fun?</p>

	<p>In language cafes sometimes people give feedback. They say it would be better if you do this and that but overall it's very good but it would be better.</p> <p>Sometimes they give [feedback] if they feel like it would help the people to practice the language for example more.</p> <p>Afterwards, there's this volunteer, we do this together, and we discuss how we can make this better. But as for documentation, we don't really document how we can make things because I do this thing over and over every time so it's all in my head. Maybe it'd be better if I write everything so that the next person maybe could benefit from that but we do document for example how to do things for our other program events. We have a Word document where we write the process and how to do things.</p>
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Appendix K: Communication Guidelines

(See next page).

COMMUNICATION PRACTICES & SUGGESTIONS ÜBER DEN TELLERRAND

A comprehensive guide to communication, networking,
and community outreach across satellites.





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This document is structured by topic to offer **guidance** and **suggestions** regarding communication methods and platforms used by Über den Tellerrand

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PURPOSE

This document offers **suggestions and guidelines** for staffers at Über den Tellerrand on how to effectively communicate with other staff members, volunteers, SAFIRs, participants, and satellites. The goal is to **enhance communication** across various satellites in a way that increases **one-on-one connectivity**, fosters **network engagement**, and **minimizes confusion**.



WHAT WE DO

At Über den Tellerrand, we create spaces in which people from different cultures can meet and get to know each other without prejudice based on common interests. We have a wide range of meeting and mentoring programs as well as cookbooks and cooking courses.



WHY WE DO IT

We want to live in a society that is determined by social cohesion, mutual respect, and openness to diversity. That is why we advocate everyday interaction between people of different origins on an equal footing. We give impulses and spread our vision of an open and tolerant society in order to shape intercultural coexistence in Germany and Europe in the long term.



HOW WE DO IT

We create spaces that enable encounter and exchange on an equal footing and promote friendships between people with and without a refugee experience. In culinary, creative and sporting activities, people from the most diverse cultures meet, get to know each other without prejudice and break down prejudices. By building a sustainable, global network, we promote an open and tolerant society.





INGREDIENTS OF STRONG COMMUNICATION

The story of Über den Tellerrand is structured around cooking which creates a sense of **unity** and fosters an **open community**. Our mission of **extending beyond the plate** is using cooking to create an atmosphere which fosters dialogue with the mission of **eliminating prejudice**.

In order to achieve our mission, we need effective communication methods between our staff, participants, and volunteers. All ingredients of a cake combine together to form a delicious dessert 🍰. Similarly, the following **three ingredients of communication** combine to maintain a strong communication structure within our organization:



Fostering One-on-One Connections: Communication strategies are used to foster **spontaneous** and **one-on-one communication**.



Motivating Others to Collaborate: Communication strategies create **opportunities**, **relationships**, and **environments** that make individuals want to collaborate across all satellites.



Creating Spaces for Feedback: Spaces are created for individuals to express **anonymous feedback** to refine our communication strategies and allow people from all walks of life to be heard.



FOSTERING ONE-ON-ONE CONNECTIONS

One-on-one connection is a key component of **interpersonal communication**. We define interpersonal communication as **verbal, written, listening, and non-verbal** communication between two or more people to express information, ideas, or feelings.



One-on-one connection is an important element of communication at Über den Tellerrand which brings our community closer together. By **forming connections with others**, we as a community understand each other and our personal stories. By establishing one-on-one connections, the network of Über den Tellerrand becomes **more unified** and creates **stronger relationships** throughout the organization.



In the upcoming chapters, we will explore different ways to foster one-on-one connections through the use of various online communication tools and strategies. By adopting the strategies suggested in this document, we will all make "**fostering one-on-one connections**" a common practice.

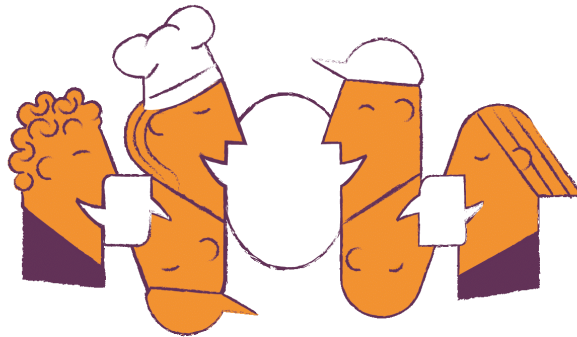


MOTIVATING OTHERS TO COLLABORATE

At Über den Tellerrand, our entire satellite network works together as **one team**. To strengthen our team connection, we would like to **foster motivation** across the network by encouraging more **frequent participation** in opportunities to **connect across satellites**.



With the online transition of events, maintaining motivation levels can be challenging. Encouragement across the network is needed now more than ever. If everyone in the network makes an effort to **motivate others to collaborate** more in discussions or events, collectively we can **develop stronger connections**, and be better equipped to achieve our mission. Fostering that motivation and engagement can be as simple as using emojis in online messaging, or something more specific like posting motivational content on social media.



By adopting the communication strategies outlined in this document, we will all make the **“motivating others to collaborate”** ingredient a common practice in our day to day routines.



CREATING SPACES FOR FEEDBACK

Feedback is very important at Über den Tellerrand. As we continue adapting to communication amidst the pandemic, we would like to implement a **continuous feedback mechanism** that is anonymous. In addition to the yearly surveys, we would like to look further into what our staff, volunteers, and participants think about our events and organization as a whole. Using this feedback, we can better assess our communication and event structure to tailor them towards our community.

The questions below are example questions that can be used. It is suggested that the questionnaire should be reviewed weekly.

Suggested Questions:

1. What is your role at Über den Tellerrand? (staff, volunteer, or participant)
2. What satellite are you from?
3. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to communication for your satellite?
4. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to communication with other satellites?
5. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to volunteer engagement?
6. What comments, suggestions, or other feedback do you have in regards to participant engagement?
7. Please provide any other comments, suggestions, or other feedback in regards to your experience with Über den Tellerrand?

You may also reach us at the following email at any time for any comments, suggestions, or concerns: **satelliten@ueberdentellerrand.org**

By adopting a **continuous feedback mechanism**, we will all make the feedback a common practice in our day to day routines.





TOOLS FOR ONLINE COMMUNICATION

At Über den Tellerrand, there is a clear **purpose** and **strategy** behind each online communication tool used to communicate with staff, volunteers, and participants. The main tools are **Slack**, **WhatsApp**, **Zoom**, and **Kumospace**.



Slack

Slack is an **instant-messaging app** that is used to communicate between staff members and other satellites at Über den Tellerrand. Slack offers the ability to message someone privately or message an entire group. Groups can be broken down into different channels to keep information organized.



WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an **instant-messaging app** that is mostly used to communicate with volunteers at Über den Tellerrand. WhatsApp offers the ability to message someone privately or message an entire group. WhatsApp also allows users to start voice and video calls, as well as send audio recorded messages.



Zoom

Zoom is an online platform that provides **virtual meeting spaces**. Zoom offers the ability to share audio and video, as well as communicate through chat. Zoom is used to host online meetings between staff members at Über den Tellerrand, as well as host online events with participants.



Kumospace

Kumospace is an online platform that provides **virtual meeting spaces**. In Kumospace, users can move around different rooms to mimic in-person engagements in real spaces. Kumospace can be used to host informal gatherings such as coffee breaks, meetings, and events.





BENEFITS & LIMITATIONS OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

The tables below outline the capabilities of the main communication platforms used at Über den Tellerrand to compare use. The tables are organized into “**Messaging**” and “**Video Calls**” to compare features across all platforms.

MESSAGING				
Feature	Slack	WhatsApp	Zoom	Kumospace
Private Messaging	✓	✓	✓	✓
Channels	✓			
Group Chat	✓	✓		
Emojis	✓	✓	✓**	✓**
File Sharing	✓	✓	✓	
Pinning Messages	✓			
Starring Messages	✓	✓		
Message Reactions	✓			
Integrations	✓		✓	
Polling	✓ (integration)		✓	

**supports emojis from phone keyboard



BENEFITS & LIMITATIONS OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

VIDEO CALLS				
Feature	Slack	WhatsApp	Zoom	Kumospace
One-on-One Video Calls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi-Person Video Calls	✓ (with paid version)	✓ (up to 8 people)	✓ (up to 100 people)	✓ (up to 240 people; 30 per room)
Individual Video-Chat Rooms			✓ (up to 50 rooms)	✓ (up to 8 rooms)
Spatial Audio				✓
Mobility around Rooms			✓	✓
Screen-sharing	✓ (with paid version)		✓	✓
Broadcasting				✓
Video Recording			✓	
Pinning Video			✓	✓
Video Reactions			✓	
Host			✓	✓
# of Co-Hosts			✓ (no limit)	✓ (no limit)



FEATURES OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

This section goes into further detail on the features for each platform and how to best use them. We provide information on how to 1) find information, 2) share information, 3) reduce notifications, 4) develop interpersonal connections, and 5) promote engagement.

Slack

Finding Information

- ❑ **Pinning** important messages that staff refer back to such as announcements, meetings, etc. is used to easily find information.
 - ❑ Staff can also **save** messages they may need to locate in the future.
- ❑ **Starring** channels that you regularly use to bring them to the top of the channels section on the sidebar.
- ❑ Use the “**Remind me about this**” feature for individual messages you want to go back to in the future. This feature is found on the upper right-hand side of a message under “More actions.” There are 6 options including 20 minutes, 1 hour, 3 hours, tomorrow, next week, and custom where you can set a different amount of time.
- ❑ Enable the “**All unreads**” sidebar setting by going to “Preferences” and then “Sidebar.” You will be able to see all unread messages here from all channels. This setting minimizes time spent searching for messages.

Sharing Information

- ❑ **Linking files** from Google Drive is a more secure way to share documents with other staff members.

Reducing Notifications

- ❑ Enable the “**Notify me about direct messages, mentions, and keywords**” setting by going to “Preferences” and then “Notifications.” This setting reduces the number of notifications you receive and only notifies you when you receive a direct message, someone mentions your name, or when someone sends a message with a keyword you have set in your settings. Keywords can be set under “Notifications.”
- ❑ Set a **notification schedule** by going to “Preferences” and then “Notifications.” You can choose when you would like to receive notifications. The three options are every day, weekdays, or custom where you can set your own schedule.

Developing Interpersonal Connections

- ❑ **Direct messaging** is used for more personal, one-on-one communication between staff members.
- ❑ Use **emojis** to add a personal touch to your messages. 😊
- ❑ Use **reactions** on messages to express your personal thoughts.

Promoting Engagement

- ❑ Try using the Simple Poll integration or the Polly integration to encourage staff members to participate in discussions and share their personal insights. Use emojis to add a fun, light-hearted element to each question and/or answer choice.
 - ❑ Example Polls:
 1. How is everyone feeling today?
 - a. Great! 😊
 - b. Okay. 😐
 - c. Not good. 😞
 2. What is your favorite fruit?
 - a. Apple. 🍏
 - b. Banana. 🍌
 - c. Orange. 🍊
- ❑ Try integrating game apps such as Trivia, which offers a variety of games including fun quizzes, word puzzles, word searches, this or that, and pictionary.

WhatsApp

Finding Information

- ❑ Use the **“Chat Search”** feature under “Group Info” in a chat to locate specific messages.
- ❑ **Starring** messages allows you to bookmark important information (only you can access your starred messages). Access starred messages under “Starred Messages” in the settings tab.
- ❑ All **media, links, and documents** shared in a chat can be found under “Group Info.”
- ❑ Use the **“Add Group Description”** feature under “Group Info” to decrease confusion when deciding which chat to look to find specific information.
- ❑ Use the **“Search”** feature under the “Chats” tab to find a particular chat.

Sharing Information

- ❑ **Media, links, and documents** can be shared in chats.
- ❑ Try to not share secure information in WhatsApp chats.
- ❑ Use the **“Save to Camera Roll”** feature under “Group Info” in a chat to enable or disable images sent in a chat being saved directly to your camera roll.

Reducing Notifications

- ❑ Use the “**Mute**” feature under “Group Info” to mute notifications for certain chats.

Developing Interpersonal Connections

- ❑ **Private messaging** is used for more personal, one-on-one communication with volunteers and participants.
- ❑ Use the “**Voice Record**” feature in chats for more personal communication with volunteers and participants.
- ❑ Use **voice** or **video** calls for even more personal engagement with volunteers and participants.
- ❑ Use **emojis** to add a personal touch to your messages. 😊

Promoting Engagement

- ❑ Focus on **engaging** personally with newer volunteers and participants.
- ❑ Focus on **engaging** personally with volunteers and participants who are non-native German speakers.
- ❑ Focus on **engaging** personally with volunteers and participants who do not engage as much as others in chats.
- ❑ Use a friendly profile picture with a big smile! 😊
- ❑ Use colorful and engaging group profile pictures for chats, which can be changed under “Group Info.”
- ❑ Try posting **Stories** under the “Status” tab to add a personal touch.

Zoom

Sharing Information

- ❑ Add Zoom meetings to **shared calendars** so everyone is aware of when there is a new call scheduled.
- ❑ **Screen sharing** is used to communicate material in an easier manner to further emphasize the information.
- ❑ When screen sharing **videos**, the “share computer sound” box in the bottom right of the share window must be checked to enable those on the call to hear the audio from the video (It is always off by default).
- ❑ The **recording feature** is used to record meetings and the **live transcript feature** is used to provide a transcript of what was said at each meeting for notes.
- ❑ Allow everyone on the call to send and **share files** located on their computer through Zoom by having the host enable file transfer settings by logging in to their Zoom profile using a web browser

Developing Interpersonal Connections

- ❑ **Direct messaging** is used for more personal, one-on-one communication.

- ❑ Use **emojis** to add a personal touch to your messages. 😊
- ❑ Use **reactions** to express your personal thoughts.

Promoting Engagement

- ❑ **Breakout rooms** are used to have more individual conversations.
 - ❑ When setting up breakout rooms, click the option titled “**Let participants choose room**” to give the participants the ability to select their own breakout room.
 - ❑ The host can **name** each room according to what it is going to be used for.
- ❑ The **chat** is utilized to converse when discussions are taking place. It is also a helpful place to send links when you want everyone to access the same information.
- ❑ **Reactions** can be used to show an understanding of topics, approval of the discussion, and add enthusiasm to the conversation.
- ❑ **Polls** can be used to add a fun element to a meeting or to ask an anonymous question.
- ❑ When screen sharing, **annotation tools** like **text**, **draw**, and **stamp** are used to demonstrate ideas to the entire call in a more collaborative manner.

Kumospace

Sharing Information

- ❑ When planning events, hosts can use the **share screen** feature which lets everyone in that space see the edits or changes being made.
- ❑ Event planners can also use **Miro** through the share screen feature so everyone is on the same page when events are being planned, offering the chance for changes to be made in real time.
- ❑ Combining **Miro and Kumospace** eliminates unnecessary confusion among staffers and unneeded back and forth where a lapse in communication and understanding can occur. The **chat function** helps people connect more privately or share information with the entire group easily.

Developing Interpersonal Connections

- ❑ Kumospace offers a fun, easy way to shift from a typical video conference.
- ❑ Offers users the **chance to move around a virtual room, have individual conversations**, and **network** with other people in the room.
- ❑ Provides the opportunity to engage in **spontaneous conversation** with other guests with its spatial audio feature.

Promoting Engagement

- ❑ Allows users to customize the space based on the **mood of an event**. Choosing the best environment offers fun interactions that guests can explore. Hosts have the opportunity to create multiple rooms guests can explore through virtual walkways.
- ❑ Different spaces to choose from:

Living Room	Office
Local Bar	Rooftop Bar
Student Center	Center Stage
The Speakeasy	Disco Diner
World Cafe	Many More!

- ❑ Guests can explore the various rooms in their space, helping **mimic in-person interactions and connections**.
- ❑ Follow this guide (shown below), where Kumospace space makes **spontaneous conversation, networking, and connection** much easier:





Securing/Moderating Your Space

- ❑ Event hosts/co-hosts can use the **broadcast feature** to make themselves heard by everyone regardless of which room they're in.
 - ❑ Presenters can use this feature to **help draw attention** to their presentation especially when guests are in other rooms.
- ❑ Event space creators can **restrict access** to people within their company or organization.
- ❑ Hosts have the **ability to remove anyone** from their space who shouldn't be there or causing any type of disruption.
- ❑ **Video and audio are encrypted** to ensure privacy and security of events.
- ❑ Kumospace **does not record/store** any video or audio of its users.





COMMUNICATION IN OUR NETWORK

Our network is large and growing. To foster communication between different people within our network, this chapter separates communication practices into 4 sections. The first outlines **communication with Berlin staff & satellites**; the second outlines **communication with volunteers/SAFIRs**; the third outlines communication with **participants**; the last section provides **suggestions for social media**.



COMMUNICATION WITH BERLIN STAFF & SATELLITES

Über den Tellerrand's Berlin staff strive to **promote openness** and the desire to forge effective plans for the future. Everyone can have a say; every opinion is important to us and is heard. We are convinced of what we do and approach our work with a lot of joy and energy. To promote better collaboration, we recommend satellites connect with the Berlin Network Team at least **twice a month**. With that we can assess the condition of each satellite and offer assistance if/when needed.

With community and connection as a foundation of Über den Tellerrand, we encourage satellites to participate in **co-hosted events** with other satellites using either **Kumospace** or **Zoom**. This will promote networking and engagement among staffers, participants and volunteers as well as a deeper connection among the various satellites in the Über den Tellerrand community where new friends and connections are made. In order to organize events across satellites, there needs to be clear, simple, and effective communication strategies between staff; we encourage you to follow guidelines below outlining communication between staff.

Communication between staff across satellites takes place via **Slack, Email, Zoom, Kumospace, Miro, and Google Drive**.

To engage more **one-on-one** and **spontaneously** with your colleagues, it is best to communicate in the following methods:

- ❑ Slack Private Messaging
- ❑ WhatsApp Messaging (**include documents with WhatsApp numbers and information including role, hobbies, etc.**)
- ❑ Kumospace Video Chat

MESSAGES

Slack is used on a day-to-day basis and email is used on an as-needed basis.

Slack

The **main** instant messaging communication tool between Berlin staff and other satellites.

Slack is used to:

- ❑ Share events, Google Drive files, other information
- ❑ Discuss topics
- ❑ Ask questions

Channels are divided by topic (i.e. events, mobile kitchen, coffee break, etc.):

- ❑ Uses mostly formal language during discussion
- ❑ Uses informal language in direct messages and the coffee break channel
- ❑ Uses emojis to:
 - ❖ Create a **friendly** atmosphere 😊
 - ❖ Break down language barriers
 - ❖ Provide emotional context behind messages

Email

An additional messaging tool to send more **sensitive information** as well as to **reiterate topics** discussed in Slack.

MEETINGS

Meetings between Berlin's staff are held on a weekly basis and discuss:

- ❑ How everyone is feeling
- ❑ Current projects
- ❑ Problems and solutions
- ❑ Questions

Meetings between coordinators of the 8 largest satellites (Berlin, Hamburg, Luneburg, Cologne, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Freiburg, and Munich) are held on a **bi-weekly basis** and discuss:

- ❑ How each satellite is doing
- ❑ Current and future projects/events
- ❑ Problems and solutions
- ❑ Questions

Other meetings between the Berlin staff as well as with other satellites are scheduled on an as-needed basis.

Zoom

The video-chat communication tool for more **formal** meetings with staff and/or satellites.

- ❑ Used for meetings that need to be recorded/transcribed

Kumospace

The video-chat communication tool for **informal** meetings with staff and/or satellites.

- ❑ Used for informal meetings or gatherings (such as coffee breaks! ☕) with staff to promote **one-on-one connections** and establish **close relationships**.
- ❑ Hop into different rooms to **connect with new people**, enjoy some music, and get a sense of in-person interaction.
- ❑ Talk with others in group or private conversations in the same space to mimic an in-person experience where groups can **spontaneously** form and dissolve in different areas, creating a sense of connection and community.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration between staff members and other satellites is on an as-needed basis.

Miro

The visual planning tool for **brainstorming ideas** for projects, events, etc.

Google Drive

The **file storage** and collaboration tool used to create documents, spreadsheets, and presentations.





COMMUNICATION WITH VOLUNTEERS/SAFIRS

VOLUNTEERS

Über den Tellerrand's volunteers create spaces to get to know people with and without refugee experience. Our volunteers support us by organizing and creating new event activities. They play a key role in promoting an interpersonal atmosphere and enabling encounters on an equal footing.

It is highly encouraged that all staff members and volunteers participate in the **monthly Zoom meeting**. It is recommended that you **encourage others** in the network to attend.

Reasons to attend include:

- Learning about interesting events/concepts at other satellites
- Meeting new people
- Broadening your network



It is encouraged that you follow up with at least one individual (staff or volunteer) you met at another satellite **after the monthly Zoom meeting** in order to foster a more connected community. Some reasons to meet new people at other satellites include:

- Receiving new perspectives/insights on completing a particular task
- Checking-in on other satellites
- Broadening your network
- Developing new friendships



Communication with volunteers takes place via **WhatsApp, Email, Zoom, and Kumospace**.

MESSAGES

WhatsApp is used on a day-to-day basis and email is used on an as-needed basis.

WhatsApp

The **main** instant messaging communication tool between staff and volunteers.

- Used to:
 - ❖ Share event protocol and other information
 - ❖ Ask questions
- Style:

- ❖ Simple, informal language
- ❖ Many motivating emojis 😊

Email

An **additional messaging tool** to communicate with new volunteers.

MEETINGS

One hour interviews with individuals who are interested in joining as a volunteer are scheduled on an as-needed basis.

Meetings between staff and volunteers (about 10 to 12) are held **once a month** to discuss:

- Past events
- Future events
- Suggestions
- Upcoming event protocol
- Questions

Gatherings between volunteers are suggested to **promote bonding** and build close relationships in a more **interpersonal** way.

Zoom

The video-chat communication tool for meetings with new volunteers and current volunteers.

- Breakout rooms are encouraged to promote that sense of **informal** conversations and connection.
- Reaching out and having **spontaneous conversation** with new volunteers helps them feel accepted and gives them a sense of our event atmosphere.

Kumospace

The video-chat communication tool for meetings with new and current volunteers.

- Used for **informal** meetings or gatherings with volunteers to promote **one-on-one connection** and establish close relationships.
- Hop into different rooms to **connect with new people**, enjoy some music, and get a sense of in-person interaction.
- Talk with others in group or private conversations in the same space. This helps mimic an in-person experience where groups can **spontaneously** form and dissolve in different areas, creating that sense of connection and community.

SAFIRS

SAFIR is Arabic and means ambassador. We have been training volunteers in the SAFIR project since 2019 from our network of Über den Tellerrand ambassadors. When deployed throughout Germany, SAFIR supports our regional groups, represented by Über den Tellerrand, and provides information about our work. Depending on personal strengths and interests, you may take over the SAFIR missions of your choice and thus help to strengthen our network and to spread our message.



Communication with the SAFIRs takes place via **Whatsapp, Email, and Zoom.**

MESSAGES

WhatsApp is used on a day-to-day basis and email is used on an as-needed basis.

WhatsApp

The **main** instant messaging communication tool between staff and SAFIRs.

- ❑ Used to:
 - ❑ Share meetings
 - ❑ Remind SAFIRs about meetings 3 to 4 days prior
 - ❑ Provide information on SAFIR missions
 - ❑ Ask questions
- ❑ Uses:
 - ❑ Simple, informal language
 - ❑ Many motivating emojis 😊

E-mail

An additional messaging tool to provide **more detailed information** and inquiries about SAFIR missions.

MEETINGS

Meetings between staff and SAFIRs are held **every 6 weeks**. Meeting invites are sent 2 weeks prior. In these meetings, staff and SAFIRs discuss:

- ❑ News from Berlin

- ❑ News from each satellite
- ❑ Missions that have taken place
- ❑ Ideas for future missions

Gatherings between SAFIRs are suggested to **promote bonding** and build close relationships in a more interpersonal way.

Encourage SAFIRs to fill out the **continuous feedback** form at the end of meetings.

Zoom

The video-chat communication tool for meetings with new SAFIRs and current SAFIRs.

- ❑ Breakout rooms are encouraged to promote that sense of **informal conversations** and connection.
- ❑ Reaching out and having **spontaneous conversation** with new participants helps them feel accepted and gives them a sense of our event atmosphere.
- ❑ Inclusion is key at our Zoom events. We want people to feel comfortable coming to our events.

Kumospace

The video-chat communication tool for meetings with new and current SAFIRs.

- ❑ Used for informal meetings or gatherings with SAFIRs to promote **one-on-one connection** and establish close relationships.
- ❑ Hop into different rooms to connect with new people, enjoy some music, and get a sense of **in-person interaction**.
- ❑ Talk with others in group or private conversations in the same space. This helps mimic an in-person experience where groups can spontaneously form and dissolve in different areas, creating that sense of **connection and community**.



COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

Über den Tellerrand's participants are our storytellers. They are people in our satellite cities and our mobile kitchen; people with stories to share, networks to form, friendships to forge, and connections that can last a lifetime. Our participants are people we develop personal encounters, common interests, life plans, beautiful moments, and our dreams with. They are a family who are inspiring and ready to share stories and moments with.

Communication with the participants takes place via **Whatsapp, Email, Newsletter, Facebook, Instagram, Zoom, Kumospace**, and our **website**.

MESSAGES

WhatsApp is used on a day-to-day basis, email is used on an as-needed basis, and the newsletter is sent out on a bi-monthly basis.

WhatsApp

- ❑ We like to stay in contact with our participants using WhatsApp groups. We strive to create an **inclusive community** where people can be themselves in the group.
- ❑ With **networking, friendships, and connections** as a few of our main goals, we encourage meeting new people in these groups.
- ❑ Information about upcoming events, changes or future plans are shared here.
- ❑ As an inclusive group, any type of hateful speech, images, or voice notes will be immediately removed from the group.

Email

An **additional messaging tool** to communicate with new participants who are connecting with members in our organization.

Newsletter

- ❑ Keeping up with current events in the organization, as well as future events can be done through our monthly newsletter as well.
- ❑ Developments within the organization or exciting additions are also included in our newsletter. We excite our subscribers to make **#maketheworldabetterplate**.

EVENTS

Events are held a few times a week.

Zoom

The video-chat communication tool for hosting our events and engaging with our participants.

- ❑ Breakout rooms are encouraged to promote that sense of **informal** conversations and **connection**.
- ❑ Reaching out and having **spontaneous conversation** with new participants helps them feel accepted and gives them a sense of our event atmosphere.
- ❑ Inclusion is key at our Zoom events. We want people to feel comfortable coming to our events.

Encourage participants to fill out the **continuous feedback** survey at the end of events.

Kumospace

The video-chat communication tool for meetings with new and current participants.

- ❑ Used for informal meetings or gatherings with volunteers to promote **one-on-one connection** and establish close relationships.
- ❑ Hop into different rooms to **connect with new people**, enjoy some music, and get a sense of in-person interaction.
- ❑ Talk with others in group or private conversations in the same space. This helps mimic an in-person experience where groups can **spontaneously** form and dissolve in different areas, creating that sense of connection and community.

Website

- ❑ Our website is also a great resource for people wanting to learn more about Über den Tellerrand and our mission.
- ❑ Information about events, projects, and updates are all expressed on the website.
- ❑ As arguably our first line of connection for new or interested people, our website showcases the atmosphere of Über den Tellerrand, our brand, volunteers, and stories of people who have been impacted by our organization.
- ❑ Our participants are encouraged to explore our website to get a sense of Über den Tellerrand and who we are as a community.



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

SOCIAL MEDIA & BRANDING BASICS

One part of our missions is showing togetherness in our events by showcasing our events and activities. Achieving a sense of community is done with our brand. It is important to:

- ★ Show our team, which consists of volunteers, SAFIRs, cooks, and staffers.
- ★ Highlighting the mood of our events.
- ★ Share stories from participants that showcase the mood of our events.
- ★ Show beautiful pictures of our events (always tell stories).
- ★ Use our hashtag #maketheworldabetterplate (alludes to our primary event).
- ★ Use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to showcase our various events and participants.

Posting on Social Media

Try to keep posts short and simple since attention spans on social media is low.

- ★ Look for a balanced relationship between entertaining and relevant posts.
- ★ Use visually appealing content to capture the attention of your followers.
- ★ Interact with your community by liking posts, replying to comments, and noting contributions from other organizations or communities.
- ★ Communicate quickly and regularly.
- ★ Elect social media officers at your events.
- ★ Customize content depending on the channel.

Overall it is important to tell our story through social media. Instagram stories offer an authentic and charming outlook to our events and participants. The use of emojis and tags offers an informal atmosphere which keeps our followers and participants engaged.

Facebook and Instagram

- ★ We are constantly sharing stories, incoming events, or exciting news on our Facebook and Instagram
- ★ To keep participants engaged, asking questions, posting polls, or sharing hashtags helps connect with participants while also attracting new ones.
- ★ Responding to comments promotes that sense of **informal and spontaneous conversation** between staffers and participants.

- ★ More information about our social media communication strategy can be found in branding basics above.

Facebook Tips

- ★ Use simple, short sentences.
- ★ Use emojis to reinforce statements.
- ★ Use the feeling function to reinforce content and make it visible.
- ★ Use hashtags sparingly. Only use hashtags that explain the content, support or make a statement such as #wirsindmehr or #maketheworldabetterplate.
- ★ 80% of Facebook is seen via mobile communications, so make sure that the content is adapted.
- ★ Plan posts in advance.
- ★ Search for groups / pages that fit thematically and share your contributions.
- ★ "Pin" important posts (they always appear first on your page).
- ★ Use the create events feature to showcase events.
- ★ Link people and organizations in the posts.

Instagram Tips

- ★ Uses meaningful images or videos (up to a minute).
- ★ Post high quality pictures (no shaky mobile phone picture etc.).
- ★ Pursue a visual concept and follow the red line in aesthetics (use similar filters, choose headings etc.).
- ★ Uses tags (@ people, organizations or places).
- ★ Do not use any links in the captions (if you want to use links, put them in the "Bio").
- ★ Include your location in posts.
- ★ Post when a lot of people are online (preferably 10 am or 5 pm).





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