







Cultural exchange, language learning in El Guettar and renovation of the Midoun municipal theatre

Culture, language and urban development

Culture and language are essential tools for implementing sustainable development initiatives, facilitating communication and strengthening social cohesion. In a sustainable society, these elements are crucial to ensuring respect for diversity and mutual understanding. They also help to strengthen links between individuals and communities in a multicultural context. For example, in the context of urban development project partnerships between Tunisian and German municipalities, culture and language have supported technical exchanges and provided a better understanding of the context of urban projects.

The regional project "City-to-City Cooperation Maghreb-Germany" (KWT II), commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) of Engagement Global gGmbH, from March 2020 to February 2024. Among other activities, the regional project supported project partnerships between German and Maghreb cities. The good practices highlighted in this factsheet have been developed by the partner municipalities El Guettar and the district of Böblingen on the one hand, and Midoun and Fürth on the other. These practices will be scaled up as part of the follow-up regional project "Urban Adaptation to Climate Change in the Maghreb", running from March 2024 to February 2027.



German and Tunisian Arabic language learning in El Guettar and Böblingen

In Tunisia, the regional project KWT II was implemented in collaboration with the Directorate-General of External Relations and Decentralised International Cooperation within the Ministry of the Interior.

As part of their project partnership, El Guettar and Böblingen each organised free distance learning courses in German and Tunisian Arabic for participants from their partner municipalities. This two-way exchange was supported by the regional KWT II project. The aim was to promote culture in the two partner towns, enabling them to gain a better understanding of each other's culture, discover commonalities and give a new boost to their project partnership. The aim was to help create a new vision and a better mutual understanding.



Renovation of the Midoun municipal theatre

The Midoun municipal theatre, a true cultural symbol of the city, has benefited from a complete renovation, thanks to the partnership between Midoun and Fürth, implemented during the first phase of the KWT I project between 2016 and 2020. Since 2016, technical delegations from Fürth have visited Midoun several times to discuss and plan the renovation work. The renovation programme that resulted from these fruitful exchanges included a complete overhaul of the electrical system, the sewage networks, the emergency staircases to the grandstands and the provision of easy access for people with reduced mobility (PRM).



Approaches and actions

The German language learning initiative in Böblingen and the Tunisian Arabic language learning initiative in El Guettar, as well as the renovation of the Midoun municipal theatre, were implemented through the following stages (diagram 01):





Left: Midoun municipal theatre before its renovation, February 2017.

Right: Midoun municipal theatre undergoing renovation, January 2020.

Language course in El Guettar and Böblingen

The starting point for the language course was the desire of El Guettar and the district of Böblingen to extend the thematic focus of their project partnership to the cultural field. Böblingen therefore negotiated with the district's adult education centre to offer a distance learning German course. In response, El Guettar, in collaboration with the youth centre, organised the logistics to offer this free online course to citizens who were interested. The first session took place over six months, from May to November 2021, with 100 hours of lessons and 200 hours of revision. It was designed for a group of 12 people. Due to the great interest in El Guettar and the limited number of places available, participation had to be restricted. All the participants were from El Guettar, including university and vocational students.

At the end of the first session, a post-training evaluation showed that over 85% of the participants felt that the objective of the session had been achieved. Participants reached basic level A1 in German. The online course model, delivered by trainers from the Böblingen adult education centre, was a success that also highlighted the usefulness of digitisation in the implementation of technical cooperation projects. Motivated by this evaluation and the continued interest in learning German in El Guettar, a second session was organised from May 2023. A new group of 12 people learned German in a distance learning course of 100 hours, spread over 6 months, once a week for 90 minutes.

At the same time, the municipality of El Guettar offered the district of Böblingen a distance learning course in Tunisian Arabic to familiarise them with the Tunisian dialect. This 100-hour course, spread over 6 months, was attended by 16 people from the district. Not only did they learn the basics of the Tunisian dialect, but they also gained an insight into Tunisian culture and customs.

Midoun municipal theatre renovation project

1. Preparation and initial planning (February 2016 - March 2018)

- Creation of a steering committee: This committee included representatives from the municipality of Midoun, the city of Fürth and local interest groups..
- Initial assessment: A preliminary diagnosis of the initial state of the theatre was carried out, including structural, functional and heritage aspects.
- Determination of objectives: The objectives of the renovation were clarified.
- Methodology: Consultation workshops.

2. Analysis and diagnosis (March 2018 - September 2018)

• Technical and architectural studies: Technical studies were carried out to understand the renovation needs, including structural analysis, the condition of equipment and safety requirements.

3. Project study phases (October 2018 - March 2019)

- Renovation plan: A detailed renovation plan was drawn up, taking into account architectural, technical, functional and financial aspects (preliminary design, detailed design, execution file), with validation by the technical services of the municipality of Midoun after each milestone.
- Functional and cultural programme: The future programme of cultural and artistic activities that the theatre will be able to carry out after the renovation has been defined.
- Budget and funding: A preliminary budget has been prepared.

4. Implementation (Start: May 2019 - End: February 2020)

- Site monitoring: In order to monitor the work, ensure that it is on time and on budget, and to deal with unforeseen circumstances, a monitoring team has been set up comprising Midoun's technical services, the contracted project management team and the KWT project's technical expert architect.
- Communication and transparency: Regular communication with stakeholders has been maintained to keep them informed of the progress of the construction work.
- Involvement of local cultural associations: The involvement of cultural associations throughout the process was facilitated through workshops, site visits and public events.
- Budget and funding: A provisional budget has been drawn up.

Inauguration

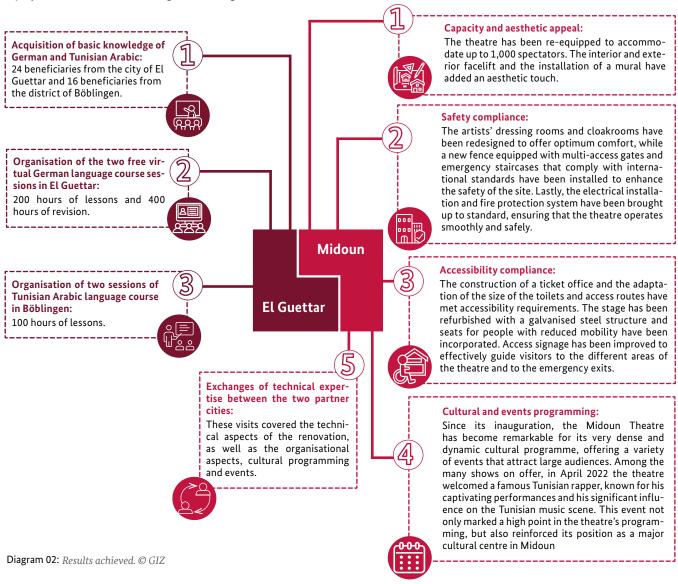
• The inauguration ceremony took place in October 2022, after the COVID-19 pandemic. It was attended by a delegation from the city of Fürth, the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Tunisia and members of the public from the city of Midoun.

Diagram 01: Methodological approach. © GIZ



Achievements

The projects achieved the following results (diagram 02):





Challenges

The language course initiative in El Guettar and Böblingen and the project to renovate the municipal theatre in Midoun faced two main challenges (diagram 03):



IN MIDOUN

The COVID-19 pandemic hindered the inauguration of the municipal theatre for two consecutive years.



IN EL GUETTAR

Selecting participants for the German course was a challenge, given the limited number of places and the high level of interest. An expression of interest and a clear list of criteria made the decision transparent. Admittedly, the virtual format was a challenge for running a language course, but the experience and digital skills gained during the COVID-19 pandemic made it possible to run the course under the right conditions. Only the instability of the internet connection rarely affected the learning.

Diagram 03: Challenges overcome. © GIZ





Left: Official inauguration of the Midoun municipal theatre, October 2020.

Right: Delegation from the German municipality of Fürth at the inauguration ceremony. In the background, a mosaic plaque symbolising partnership, peace and the coming together of peoples.

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Innovative aspects and strengths

The projects in El Guettar and Midoun stood out for their strengths, reflecting a commitment to inclusion by promoting cultural and technical exchanges between the partner cities (diagram 04):

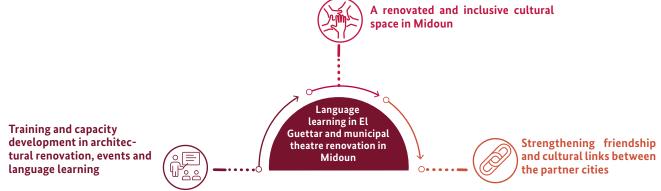


Diagram 04: Innovative aspects and strengths. © GIZ



Best practices, lessons learnt and advice

Several important lessons have been learnt and good practices identified from the experiences in El Guettar and Midoun, which should be considered when implementing similar projects:



BUILDING ON THE EXISTING EXPERIENCE:

Midoun drew inspiration from its German partner, the town of Fürth, during face-to-face and virtual exchanges concerning the renovation of Midoun's municipal theatre and cultural programming.



MUTUAL LEARNING:

El Guettar and the district of Böblingen have learned from each other, not only through face-to-face and virtual technical exchanges, but above all through the various language courses they have run. These courses were not only an opportunity to learn each other's language, but also to discover new cultures, common interests and viewpoints, and to understand customs and traditions. This has been the basis for deepening relations between partners on both sides of the Mediterranean.



TECHNICAL TRAINING FOR MIDOUN ARCHITECTS ON THE TECHNICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE THEATRE RENOVATION:

This project enabled the municipal architects to benefit from comprehensive and free technical assistance for the renovation of their theatre, thereby strengthening their autonomy and expertise in renovation.

Diagram 05: Best practices, lessons learnt and advice. © GIZ

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