

## MarktTreff Schleswig-Holstein

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MarktTreff is a project to ensure the rural local supply, to improve the quality of life in remote areas. In essence MarktTreff is a project with a social approach. The economic factor is important and wanted, but not the main target. The approach is “products and services to the MarktTreff and people to the MarktTreff”. On the other hand, the number of workplaces increases in rural municipalities with MarktTreffs – many times with family-friendly part time jobs.

These MarktTreff stores are implemented in multifunctional village centres, clustering services and products which enhance the quality of life in villages in the rural regions of Schleswig-Holstein. MarktTreffs are vital market places for products, services, informations, ideas, and initiatives – made-to-measure for each village in the project. This is manifested in the branding of MarktTreffs as Market Meeting Point and the slogan “Bei uns ist alles drin” – “At ours everything is included / You can expect everything from us”

Picture 1 MarktTreff in Heidgraben village. Source: MarktTreff



Basically, the concept is built on three cornerstones:

- the economical part (the core business, a shop or gastronomic offer)
- supplemented by services (any kind of services appropriate to the needs of the village / region, e.g. post office, social services, tourist information, medical services, educational courses, secondhand shop, coffee shop, AMT, hairdresser, physiotherapy, cosmetic studio)
- central meeting point (i. e. for civic engagement at the MarktTreff, this kind of meeting points is fundamental for the quality of life in rural villages).

A MarktTreff connects and offers the products and the services which a village needs. The establishing can be different, for instance, one store is in a historical building and another store is in a new built house. MarktTreff is based on a common concept with various individual local designs.

## Preconditions and inspiration

The particular problem was and is the change in rural areas/villages. Shops, services, restaurants, and other social meeting points get closed (food, doctors, churches, district nurse), life's quality decreases in the communities.

For this reason, the start of MarktTreff happened in 1999 initialized by the Land Schleswig-Holstein. Until today currently 39 rural communities have established a MarktTreff.

So far, the government of Schleswig-Holstein has reached the targeted goal to initiate a reliable and resilient concept to improve the quality of life in rural parts of the land. The project is funded with money by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the German Joint Task for Improvement of agricultural structure and coastal protection (GAK) and the government of Schleswig-Holstein. The brand "MarktTreff" is owned by the government of Land Schleswig-Holstein.

## Steps to set up a MarktTreff

1. The community likes the idea and wants to establish a MarktTreff specially tailored for the village (the community has to give the start boost, not someone from outside).
2. Then the municipality has to carry out a feasibility study in a participative process (this is the main step in the first phase). If the study shows a positive result the community has to contact the Ministry of Inner Affairs, Rural Areas and Integration (MILI). MILI can give financial support in selected cases based on a competition of concepts. These are only infrastructural subsidies, not long-term subsidies for the business, the shop has to defray itself. The municipality has to co-finance the investment (a private investor can be involved under certain circumstances) and to ensure the existence of the MarktTreff for 12 years (in case of a private owner of the building, they have a special contract for 12 years).

Municipalities interested in MarktTreff have to carry out a location/site check – before the feasibility study. With the support of aid money, the new MarktTreff is not allowed to intervene in economic competition (these location checks are implemented by the consulting firm BBE Handelsberatung GmbH, fixed in a framework contract given by the government of Schleswig-Holstein, but paid by each single community). BBE maps for example mobility patterns of the inhabitants, possibilities and essentials to run a shop or a restaurant.

## Different important actors

- On the local level: municipality, inhabitants, associations, economy, LEADER groups

In connection with:

- The regional level: project group consisting of ministry, state office of agriculture, environment and rural areas, ews group gmbh (statewide project management and communication), BBE Handelsberatung GmbH, and SHGT (communal association of Schleswig-Holstein);

MarktTreff advisory board: almost all statewide (Schleswig-Holstein) institutions and association which play a role in the rural areas (at that time 23: Diaconie, Rural Women's Association, IHK, Evangelical Church, Federation of cooperatives, etc.)

On the local level, ews group and BBE hold one meeting a year with every local MarktTreff project team. These meetings are a kind of evaluation, they talk for example about the economic situation as well as the volunteer work and the social aspects of the local MarktTreff.

### Structure

MarktTreff is based on a network – not on a franchise system –, covering the whole state of Schleswig-Holstein with its regional and local levels, and many partners.

The project management organizes the connecting (networking) part in the project MarktTreff, not the operative part of every single MarktTreffs. The task for the MarktTreff project management (Ingwer Seelhoff, ews group) is the statewide view, they provide information exchange with municipalities, project group, partners, and media. If the municipalities have innovative ideas, the project management support the development, to transfer these ideas to other villages / regions. They stay in contact with the persons involved and do the networking. The concept is, that local project developers have to work out the specific concept in each village (e.g. feasibility study, etc.). The concept of MarktTreff is always customized for the needs of people in the municipality. A concept for village A does not necessarily suit village B.

The grocery stores run in MarktTreffs can be managed e.g. by independent businessmen, cooperatives, or as a branch of a larger grocery store. Due to the bottom up approach, the inhabitants can say what they want and support the creation of the concept of the shop with their participation.

MarktTreff is a unique concept in Germany. The origin were the rural structure and development analyses Schleswig-Holstein (conducted with for example workshops in the various villages, initiated of the government of Schleswig-Holstein). Normally the target group are the people of small villages with max. 2,500 residents or a spatial extremely closed part of a bigger village.

The multifunctional MarktTreffs with their stores, services, and meeting points higher or safe the value of the properties in the villages. So, the investment in MarktTreffs pays off anyway.

### Implementation

MarktTreff is a concept, which is tailored for the needs of municipalities in Schleswig-Holstein. In contrast to other parts of Germany, the products in the small village shops are more orientated at "normal" grocery stores, but regional products become more and more important. So far, most users of the small stores want the "regular" supermarket supply.

To keep a store alive successfully in a village is a permanent process. There is a change in inhabitants, a change of needs, etc. The individual stores have to adapt to this.

How are the stores delivered: all big food suppliers in Schleswig-Holstein are involved in the MarktTreff project: Bartels-Langness, EDEKA, REWE. The local actors get in contact with them to find out which company might deliver the products. Sometimes it is not possible to get a delivery of goods in rural areas which makes the situation quite difficult for the villages.

Network: In case of problems the shopkeepers now have the chance to use the MarktTreff network, for instance to get in contact by telephone to other MarktTreff shopkeepers (before the time of MarktTreff they even did not know about each other; now they also can look over the fence, because very often the other shopkeeper has a different supplier and is located in a different region, e.g. North Sea or Baltic Sea).

A benefit for the project is the low-level structure in Schleswig-Holstein. Over 1,100 municipalities can decide what they want for their communities. Another benefit is that often the mayors know players up to the ministry, so this makes it much easier and faster to discuss complex questions. The network between the different actors and levels is one of the keys for the successful development of MarktTreff in Schleswig-Holstein.

### Enablers and barriers

Since 1999 no single MarktTreff had to be closed down permanently. Sometimes a shop / a MarktTreff has to be closed down for a certain period of time. Reasons are: lack of expertise, lack of commercial knowledge, personal situation / private problems – and therefore a change in the concept and / or the staff is needed. A barrier for the implementation also could be a fragmented village: political divided, problems between different groups.

Another barrier is the regulation which prevent the wished combination of different services. Problems, for instance, are the shared use of a room for physiotherapy and other medical services (because of federal regulations). Here again, the chain between project management, the government of Schleswig-Holstein, the municipalities and the inhabitants can help to solve the problems. The implementation of private financial involvement (in terms of cooperatives) was a barrier for a long time in Schleswig-Holstein, too. Another problem is the supply with regional products (a great many of food producers with no reliable logistic system). This leads to the development of new systems: "North Farmers" (Nordbauern) local regional producers are developing a new combined logistic system: e.g. fruit, cheese and meat on the same delivery trip.

### Flow of information

The information about MarktTreff is comprehensive and includes different channels:

- information for every field
- information for every municipality – e.g. personally or by newsletter
- the project website
- use of networks of the partners (e.g. Academy for Rural Areas of Schleswig-Holstein, the Rural Women's Association (annual "Day of the Rural Women")

- email
- telephone
- media (regional / national)

### Legal issues

In legal questions, MarktTreff can use its network to solve problems. Pending issues: volunteers who work in the stores are communicators in an economic sphere. How are they insured? Accident insurance and liability insurance for volunteers?

### Outcomes, impact and spreading

Results: higher quality of life in rural areas in Schleswig-Holstein, attractiveness of municipalities and regions, branding factor for the Land Schleswig-Holstein: MarktTreff is placed in the rural development scene.

Different actors are interested in the concept of MarktTreff. Other states in Germany, Austria and Finland showed interest in the concept. So MarktTreff Schleswig-Holstein stays in constant exchange. Equally, academic institutions are interested in the concept of MarktTreff. Project manager Ingwer Seelhoff thinks – as one conclusion of the daily work in the MarktTreff sphere – there is a necessity for needs-based public transport in certain regions of Schleswig-Holstein.

There are already ideas und tests to mobilize MarktTreff:

- One store offers a delivery service with an electric car (identify the needs, perception for the needs, not a scientific survey; the “survey” was the talk in the store).
- Idea of a “mobile grocery store in combination with a meeting point” (discussed in one region – and with a vote against it)
- New step: e-mobility in context to MarktTreff, electric filling station. Several municipalities set up plans (e-car-sharing with a base at the MarktTreff; one project realized).

### Lessons Learnt

A MarktTreff store is a multifunctional approach to people-to-service and service-to-people intention. An included or near meeting point is a better solution for social contacts and for higher quality of life in rural areas. I. e. elderly People who live in the village do not want to stay at home the whole day, they want to leave their houses to get together with others. So, some people visit their MarktTreffs several times a day especially to meet other people.

Fundamental for a successful implementation and sustainable realization is a broad and resilient network.

## References

Ingwer Seelhoff, project management. Interview on 08-05-2018.

Markttreff website: <http://www.markttreff-sh.de/>