

# Self-help groups for/from people with a migration experience in Austria

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## Background

Self-help groups as **voluntary associations of people to jointly cope with illnesses or psychological problems** are sometimes regarded as the fourth pillar of the health care system in Austria.

Little experience within the self-help group scene with people with a migration experience.

People with a migration experience represent a relevant share of the population and should also be able to benefit from this concept.

-> Aim of the project to identify related obstacles and solutions

## Results of needs assessment

- ✓ Austrian **concept** of self-help groups **not known** by persons migrating from other countries and only partly compatible
- ✓ People with migration experience are diverse -> difficult to gather homogenous group with similar needs and health literacy
- ✓ Negative experiences with health care system and stressful life situation as obstacles to becoming active
- ✓ Still, need to talk about chronic illness and effect on daily life is high

## Methods

### Needs assessment:

Systematic literature search, interviews and focus groups, workshops for the participatory development of the concept

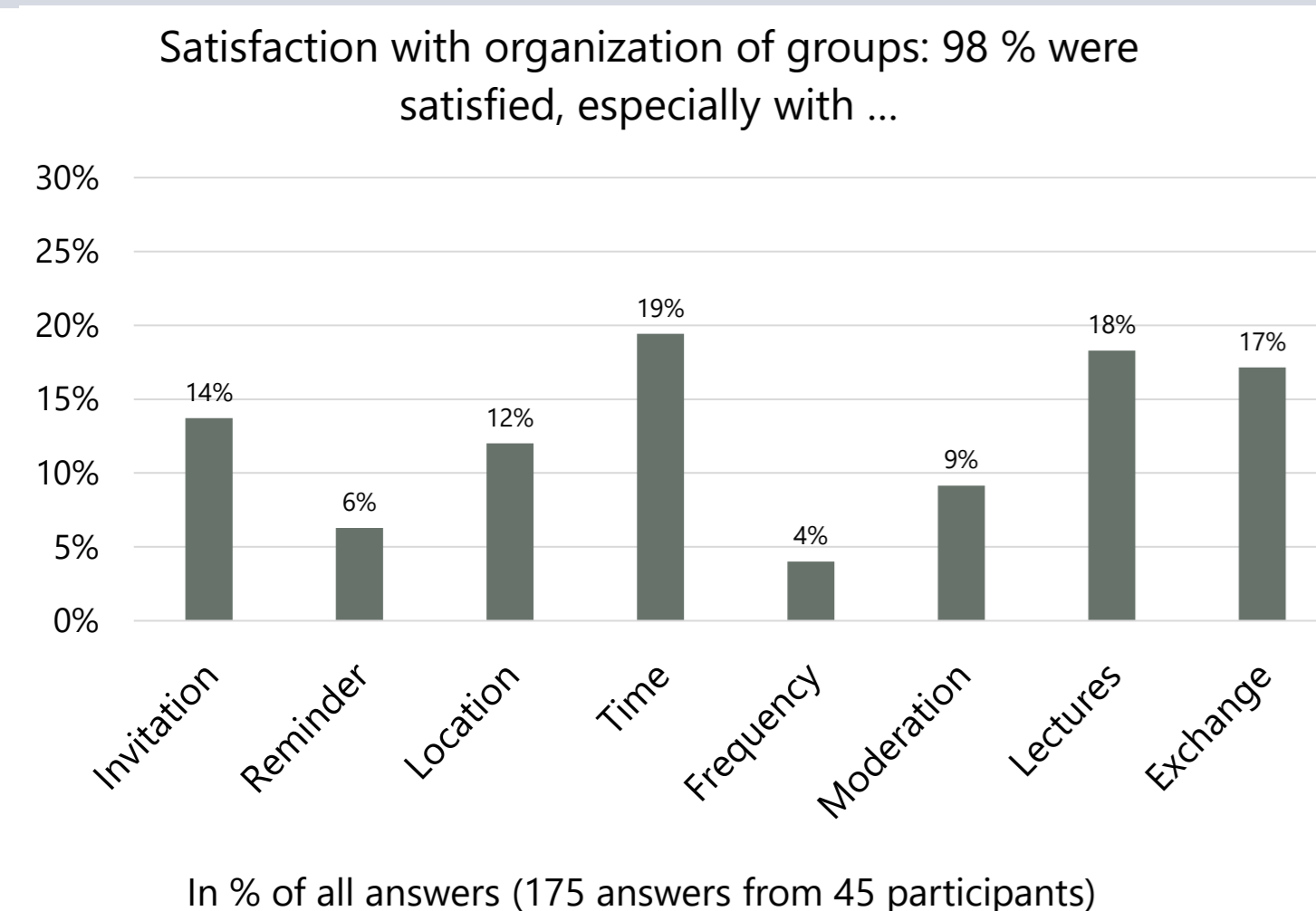
### Pilot phase:

4 self-help groups in 2 languages for migrants with diabetes, process evaluation: questionnaires, workshops with initiators

## Success factors

- ✓ Peer from community as initiator / organisator of group throughout some months, to develop trust and common understanding of concept
- ✓ Needs-oriented design: healthy food, inputs by different professionals, childcare if needed, reminders before meetings
- ✓ Targeted group composition (same language, gender, chronic disease)
- ✓ Dissemination via people from the communities
- ✓ External support: adequate premises, childcare, supervision, contacts to professionals

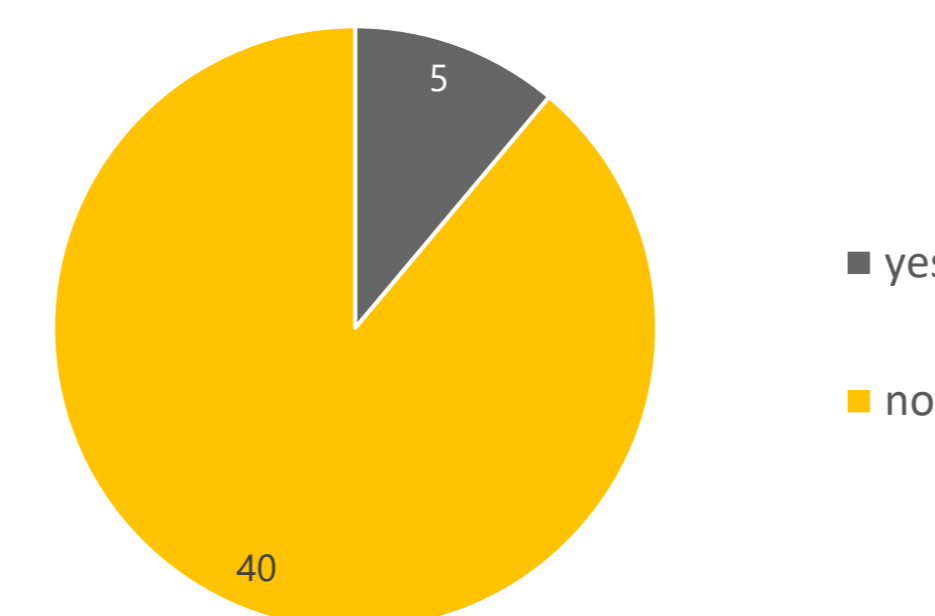
## Results of pilot phase



### Positive feedback:

- ✓ Most participants assessed the self-help group as useful and motivating
- ✓ Learned more about disease, feeling more secure about dealing with it, reduced stress
- ✓ Was able to talk about disease openly
- ✓ Feeling not alone; understanding each other, experience encouragement
- ✓ Groups would be helpful for other topics, like child education, blood pressure, addiction, ...)
- ✓ Better understanding of concept

Would you initiate a self-help group?



### Challenges:

- Finding peers willing /able to initiate and guide group throughout longer time period
- Finding adequate premises without costs for group meetings
- Reliable, regular attendance over a longer time period -> high fluctuation (60 % of participants attended at least 5 group meetings)
- Willingness to become active (as initiator or contributing to organization of group) is low
- Barriers for participation: 33% have no time due to caring responsibilities
- Still misleading expectations regarding objectives of groups