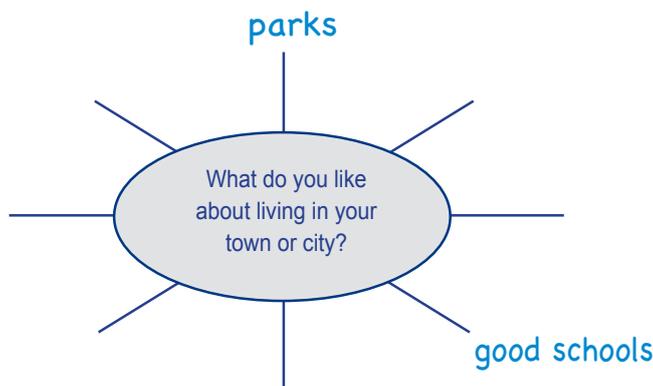## German city offers workers a free one-month stay

Level 1 ● Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. **Work with a partner. Write your ideas onto the mind map.**

parks

What do you like about living in your town or city?

good schools

b. **Compare your mind maps with other students.**

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

promising	attract	picturesque	remote	nomadic	wages

1. attractive, especially because it is old and interesting _____ (para 3)

2. make someone interested in something so that they come to see it _____ (para 3)

3. money that you get for working _____ (para 4)

4. likely to be successful _____ (para 6)

5. from a distance _____ (para 6)

6. moving from place to place, not staying in one place _____ (para 7)

extremes	open-minded	nativist	issue	revive	participants

7. people who take part in a study, a project or a course _____ (para 9)

8. make something become successful or popular again _____ (para 9)

9. a subject (often politics) that people discuss or argue about _____ (para 10)

10. looking after the interests of people who were born in a country or have lived there for a long time and not the interests of people who have moved there from somewhere else _____ (para 11)

11. opinions that are very different from each other _____ (para 12)

12. willing to think about and accept new ideas _____ (para 14)

The Guardian

onestopenglish

German city offers workers a free one-month stay

Level 1 ● Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

Try before you buy: German city offers workers a free one-month stay

David Lepeska

25 September, 2019

1 In 2018, Eva Bodenmüller read that a town in eastern Germany was inviting people to live there for a month for free. She and her partner, Carsten Borck, an artist, knew they had to leave their flat in Italy and didn't want to move back to Berlin.

2 "I thought: 'Why not Görlitz?'" said Bodenmüller, a freelance journalist.

3 Görlitz, Germany's most eastern town, is a picturesque old town that has played the part of central-European towns in Hollywood films, including *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and *The Reader*. But the old town, which attracts 140,000 tourists a year, has some problems.

4 The town has Germany's lowest wages and one of the country's highest proportions of far-right voters. After the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, many easterners moved to the west. By 2013, the number of people living in Görlitz had fallen more than 25% to 54,000.

5 The city decided they needed to attract people to live in Görlitz. They had the idea of offering a free one-month stay.

6 Other places had already had the idea of trying to attract new residents by offering free housing. Detroit was the first big city to try it. They started a programme of paying promising young professionals to live and work in the city for a year. Today the idea is being used everywhere from the Greek island of Antikythera to Candela, Italy, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, which offers $10,000 to remote workers to move there for a year.

7 More and more people now work remotely. Already, millions of working people spend much of their lives moving from one place to another. The people behind Görlitz's programme realized it could attract some of those nomadic workers. And, at the same time, it could find out what people like or dislike about the city.

8 The 54 people and groups taking part in Görlitz's Testing the City project are singles, couples and families from their 20s to 60s. They include entrepreneurs, a film-maker, a model, visual artists and musicians. Each can live in a flat and use workspaces, all for free.

9 The town hopes that some of the participants will want to move to Görlitz permanently. They also hope to get information from participants that could help to revive Germany's smaller towns. "Our aim is to learn more about what people need and why they decide to move to a town or not," said project head Robert Knippschild.

10 Görlitz has around 7,000 empty flats, and unemployment is higher than in the rest of Germany. This is one reason why Görlitz has accepted 1,200 refugees. But immigration is the most urgent issue for residents of eastern Germany, where the far-right political parties are strong.

11 Görlitz has been called "the living room" of the nativist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. In 2019, the AfD won the European Parliament elections and the state election in Görlitz, although the mayor of the city is from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) political party.

12 Bodenmüller and Borck said they spent a lot of time during their stay in Görlitz talking to local people and found a city of extremes. "In other places, you generally have people from different groups talking to each other," said Bodenmüller, who has lived in Berlin, Munich and several smaller cities. "But here there is no centre – there are just the two sides."

13 The project is about halfway through, and four participants have already decided to move to Görlitz, including German-Finnish poet Mark Mallon and his wife, Finnish artist Venla Saalo. They decided to leave Berlin because of its traffic, pollution and high rents. "Görlitz feels like a lively town with a lot of young people, students, opportunities, empty spaces and also peace and remoteness," they said. "It is a great combination for creative work."

14 Borck and Bodenmüller like the cheap rents and large number of organic grocery shops and vegetarian restaurants but wish Görlitz had better public transport and that the people there were more open-minded. They also wished they had more time there.

© Guardian News and Media 2019

First published in *The Guardian*, 25/09/19

German city offers workers a free one-month stay

Level 1 ● Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

3 Comprehension check

Choose the right options to make the sentences true.

1. Görlitz is a town in *central / eastern* Germany.

2. It has a very *ugly / pretty* old town that has been used in many films.

3. Many people moved away from Görlitz *before / after* the fall of the Berlin wall.

4. There are *7,000 / 54,000* empty flats in Görlitz.

5. There are *no / many* immigrants in Görlitz.

6. The strongest political party in Görlitz is the far-right *AfD / CDU*.

7. Workers in Görlitz get paid *more / less* money than in the rest of Germany.

8. The Testing the City project offers people free accommodation and a free *workspace / parking space* for a month.

9. The idea behind the project is to find out what makes people want to live in *a city / Germany*.

10. Görlitz *is / is not* the first place in the world to offer free housing to attract people to their city.

4 Using the key words

Use eight of the key words from task 2 to complete the questions.

1. What could your town or city do to _____ more tourists?

2. Do you think you are an _____ person?

3. Are there any _____ political parties in your country?

4. What is the biggest _____ in the local news at the moment?

5. Do most people in your profession get high or low _____?

6. Do you know anyone who is a _____ worker?

7. What is the most _____ place you know?

8. How many _____ are there on your English course?

5 Discussion

• **Would you like to take part in a project like Testing the City? Why? Why not?**

• **If you could live anywhere in the world, for free for a month, where would it be?**

6 Webquest

• **Find out more about the town of Görlitz.**

  • What would you like to see there?

  • Why is it sometimes called Görliwood?

  • How could you get there from where you are now?

KEY

2 Key words

1. picturesque
2. attract
3. wages
4. promising
5. remote
6. nomadic
7. participants
8. revive
9. issue
10. nativist
11. extremes
12. open-minded

4 Using the key words

1. attract
2. open-minded
3. nativist
4. issue
5. wages
6. remotely
7. picturesque
8. participants

3 Comprehension check

1. eastern
2. pretty
3. after
4. 7,000
5. many
6. AfD
7. less
8. workspace
9. a city
10. is not