

## **Interim report: Milestones and stumbling blocks**

An excerpt from the Memorandum of the National Thematic Network in the Federation's ESF Programme for migrants with a refugee background\* and refugees with access to the labour market

### **I. Networking practice in the Federation's ESF Programme**

#### **The goals of the Federation's ESF Programme**

With the "Federation's ESF Programme on labour-market support for migrants with a refugee background and refugees with access to the labour market", the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has launched a programme which is intended to support the labour market integration process. The programme supports networks which focus on the following themes at local and regional level:

- support through advice and placement;
- increasing opportunities for (continued) employment and safeguarding jobs;
- information of and awareness-creation among stakeholders on the labour market who are relevant to the target group and among public figures.

One of the programme's main target groups are "migrants with a refugee background", that is individuals who have received a residence permit on probation (cf. on this the information contained in the Annex) according to the statutory "grandfather clause" (*Altfallregelung*). Over and above this, other refugees who are able to draw subsistence benefits as a result of their residence prospects in Germany and for integration into work in accordance with Book II of the Social Code (*SGB II*), also receive support.

This group of individuals is to be aided to become integrated into the labour and training markets, and in particular their employment is also to be placed on a stable long-term footing. The Federation's ESF Programme particularly supports short-term job-related qualifications as a means for sustainably safeguarding jobs.

...The programme therefore also includes asylum-seekers and "tolerated" persons (*Geduldete*) who have (at least) secondary access to the labour market. These groups, who have no legal long-term residence prospects, can become independent of state support benefits in Germany by becoming employable or by increasing their employability, as well as becoming able to be re-integrated into the labour market in their home countries. This group of individuals is to be primarily supported by means of advice and skill-development which is to aim to achieve both access to training and employment, as well as social integration.

#### **Facts and figures regarding the networks**

- Promotion volume and timeframe: The total volume of the Federation's ESF

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\* Translator's note: *Bleibeberechtigte* (migrants with a refugee background) are immigrants whose residence was previously "tolerated" (*geduldet*), i.e. their deportation was suspended, for either eight or six years, respectively, subject to conditions set out in section 104a of the Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*) and are now granted residence status on probation.

Programme, including national co-funding, is roughly EUR 34 million. Of this, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provides EUR 19 million from the resources of the European Social Fund (ESF) and roughly EUR 12 million from its own budget.

- 43 advice networks comprising roughly 220 individual projects are being promoted in the period from September 2008 to the end of October 2010. The term of the projects is generally two years.

According to the networks, almost 8,900 individuals had taken part in project measures as per the key date 15 August 2009. Thus, roughly 47% of the number of participants targeted by the networks at the beginning of the programme has been reached even before the end of the first year of promotion. ...

### **Networking as a programme requirement**

Network formation by establishing project associations is an obligatory requirement of the Federation's ESF Programme:

“The Federation's ESF Programme will promote networks at local and regional level. These are to bring about faster placement, and through mediation in companies, a higher level of participation on the part of the target group in measures of active labour market promotion and more stable employment.”

The tried-and-tested model of so-called development partnerships of the EQUAL promotion programme 2002-2007 was therefore taken up once again. The various players in migration and labour market policy work together at local or regional level in the context of the networks. The Federation's ESF Programme contains the requirement that the networks are formed “of different types of institution” and “combine skills from the fields of work with refugee, advice, labour market and company contacts”. As well as non-governmental organisations and welfare associations, companies, training organisations, job placement services, economic chambers and trade unions will also be involved in meeting this requirement, in addition to the responsible authorities. The fundamental concept here is that the various players' respective specialist knowledge will already be incorporated into the planning of the project work in a manner which enables the goals to be implemented effectively.

### **Networking in practice – cooperation models with strategic partners**

In accordance with the promotional guidelines, the networks are to implement the following tasks:

- labour market-related advisory activities increasing the ability to act of the target groups with regard to their opportunities on the labour market,
- advisory/placement/mediation activities increasing the willingness of companies to recruit and stabilising job security for migrants with a refugee background in the long run, and
- information and awareness-creation among stakeholders on the labour market and public figures who are relevant to the target group.

A number of promising approaches have however emerged, in particular where it was possible to build on available structures:

Taking **Hagen** as an example: The project partners of “*AuFBruCh Hagen*” (Hagen Gets Started) meet regularly with representatives of the immigration authority, of the joint agency, of the employment agency, of the social welfare office and of the integration council. Moreover, there is productive cooperation with the immigration authority: For instance, the authority has invited persons with humanitarian residence, as well as “tolerated” persons, to attend information events at which the project partners were able to learn about what they have to offer and arrange appointments. The projects reached one-third of their participants by these means.

Taking **Hersfeld-Rotenburg** as an example “*Interkulturelles Fallmanagement*” (Intercultural Case Management): The authorities involved in the local authority have their offices in the same building; there is constant contact with the case managers for migrants with a refugee background. As an opting-out local authority, the rural district decides on promotion by measures falling under Book II of the Social Code.

...

Taking **Hamburg** as an example “*Fluchtort Hamburg plus*” (Place of Refuge Hamburg plus): Within a programme (“AQUABA”), which is promoted by the Hamburg Senate, the network cooperates with a broader group of institutions and project funding organisations who work together to improve the placement of the target group. Discussions regularly take place with the employment agency and the joint agencies, as well as with the immigration authority, in order to optimise procedures in granting work permits and facilitating participation in the project measures.

The establishment of strategic partnerships is the most important precondition for successful project work. This has however proven to be difficult and above all time-consuming, especially (but not only) in the networks, where the competent authorities are not involved as project partners. A particular challenge here lies in ensuring the sustainability of the partnerships which have been established.

### **Recommendations in the field of cooperation models with strategic partners:**

- Flexible partnerships should be facilitated in order to expand successful networking practice and to attract different constellations of partners for different topics.
- Awareness-creation among the institutions for the specific interests of the target group should be improved. Public relations should also play a more important role in applications and grants in this context.
- An over-arching coaching network at federal level has proven its worth in facilitating an exchange of experience and ideas at federal level. It was possible for this to be shown in the Federation’s current ESF Programme by the National Thematic Network in the programme for migrants with a refugee background. Such an over-arching “network of networks” should be continued.

## **II. Interim results judged by the standards of state-of-the-art integration policy frameworks**

### **Individual problems**

...It is not rare for project participants not to have engaged in regular work for ten years, and in individual cases even for twenty years. It is by no means unusual for alienation from the world of work to take place under these conditions. What is more, however, individual factors in the target groups of the Federation's ESF Programme frequently make things worse and further prevent integration in the labour market:

- Large numbers of participants have scant knowledge of German. It should also be noted here that the target groups have not been entitled to attend integration courses during their stay in Germany so far. Even after a residence permit has been issued under the "grandfather clause", there is no right to attend an integration course.
- Many participants have had little school and vocational training, and some are illiterate. This does not necessarily mean that the target groups have a generally low level of training. It is more probable that an above-average number of individuals who have a poor starting position for the labour market, and hence require particular support, contact the projects of the Federation's ESF Programme.
- Formally-acquired foreign training qualifications or vocational qualifications are frequently not recognised. What is more, there are virtually no recognised instruments for the confirmation and categorisation of vocational skills which have been acquired by means of gainful employment in the country of origin, in most cases without a formal qualification.
- Previously-acquired vocational experience further loses value because it has not been applied in the years which have been spent in Germany so far, and social skills which are needed for the world of work may decrease (deskilling).
- As a result of violent experiences in the countries of origin, through flight, as well as the circumstances encountered in Germany, an above-average number of individuals can be found in the projects' target groups who are suffering from mental problems and psychosomatic diseases. The extent of this problem posed a particular challenge, especially in projects which had not previously worked with "tolerated" persons and refugees.
- A lack of childcare may make it impossible to take up certain activities which would otherwise be suitable for the target groups – for instance in care professions where shift work is the norm. Cultural reservations against childcare provision by "strangers" also apply to some participants.

### **Solutions and successes**

In view of the difficult framework and of the many individual problems, it becomes clear that there are no simple paths for direct placement in employment for the target groups of the Federation's ESF Programme – especially when it comes to sustained integration into

the labour market, as is provided for by the programme for migrants with a refugee background. Virtually each individual case requires from the projects a considerable degree of individual and at the same time multifunctional care. Against this background, the networks have developed a wide range of strategies to strengthen the interests and skills of the participants and to set the stage for placement in training and work.

Once skills have been assessed, the networks can offer further support services, the following measures, among others, having proven useful in this phase:

- preparation and coaching in making applications, including drawing up curriculum vitae,
- motivation training through individual discussions or in small groups,
- vocational linguistic promotion,
- in-house traineeships,
- vocational adjustment skill-development, and
- social advice support in the participants' surroundings, so that concentration can be fully focussed on seeking and taking up work.

## Results and recommendations in individual thematic fields

### Thematic field A) Training for young refugees

As per the key date 15 August 2009, the projects recorded 251 participants who had concluded a training contract and another 185 individuals who had taken up school training. This corresponds to 8.3% and 6.2%, respectively, of participants aged under 27.

Encouraging results can be recorded, especially in those projects whose foci include training placement. It has emerged in the project work that these young people are particularly highly motivated towards new tasks although they frequently have difficult starting circumstances. Their educational careers to date were typified by the uncertainty accompanying "tolerated" residence and the concomitant restrictions on access to work and training, as well as the difficulties encountered in life planning. Marginalisation, crime, a lack of knowledge of German, as well as of school-leaving qualifications, are widespread problems, as are incorrect perceptions of the vocational training system, everyday life at work or specific occupations.

Nonetheless, the projects have enabled many young people to take up schooling or vocational training, enabling them not only to obtain prospects for residence under the "grandfather clause", but at the same time also considerably increasing their chances of sustainable employment.

In **Recklinghausen** "*JobNet Bleiberecht*" (JobNet for migrants with a refugee background) and **Tübingen** "*Bleib in Tübingen!*" (Stay in Tübingen), "external training management" is carried out, providing support before and during training both for the young people and for the companies. Here, for instance, advance internships are offered, accompanying language skill-development and "support lessons" for trainees with problems in vocational school.

...

Taking **Berlin** as an example (*bridge* - network of the Berlin Treatment Centre for Torture Victims and of the Refugee Assistance and Migration Services Centre [*bzfo-zfm*]): The

network co-operates with the local Vivantes hospital group in acquiring training placements: First of all, the young people are trained as nursing assistants on an eight-month course. Where necessary, additional instruction in specialist language is provided in the initial months. Over and above this, the participants are supported in applications by being prepared within the network for the aptitude test. After recruitment, the young people receive weekly extra lessons within the network from nursing instructors, in particular when there are tests coming up.

Taking **Hamburg** as an example (“*Fluchtort Hamburg plus*”): Placement is largely in dual training, including in companies which are run by entrepreneurs with a migration background. In cooperation with the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, social education students act as mentors in coaching young refugees. At strategic level, it has been possible to lend the topic permanence in Hamburg by including it in the “Action Plan for Education and Training Promotion of Young People with a Migration Background” promoted by the Mayor of Hamburg. Over and above this, the training programmes for young people and the offers of youth vocational assistance for refugees were opened.

According to experience to date in the Federation’s ESF Programme, training placement can therefore be successful if it is accompanied by intensive preparatory coaching of trainees and companies. Major difficulties no longer arise here primarily through the legal framework, but as a result of individual obstacles to placement, as well as through an administrative practice which remains restrictive.

### **Recommendations in the field of “training for young refugees”:**

- The existing tools are to be adjusted and new programmes developed in order to be able to better accommodate the target groups with existing services to accompany the transition from school to training and work (transition management).
- When re-designing programmes in the context of transition management, measures should also be created which offer skill-development opportunities, outside the customary training courses, that are tailored to labour market realities, provide basic skills which are relevant to jobs and increase the prospects for subsequent employment. This appears to be necessary because a large number of target group members are unable to take advantage of the services provided in the dual training system, which are tailored to seamless training biographies.

### **Thematic field B) Work placement**

1,041 successful job placements have been reported from the projects. ... In many cases, a job placement is only possible in the shape of auxiliary work and short-term temporary work or in sectors in which short-term, seasonal, low-paid employment is customary (hotels and gastronomy, agriculture).

Added to this is regional differences, where in addition to the tight labour market resulting from the economic and financial crisis, the different wage structure also has an impact.

Unlike other European countries, no institutionalised, systematic assessment of refugees' skills, in other words a survey of their vocational qualifications and skills (formal and informal), as well as of the level of education, is carried out in Germany. Moreover, refugees are frequently unable to submit references and formal qualifications because of the conditions dictated by their flight. As a result, the task is made much more difficult both for the competent standard institutions, as well as for providers of skill-development, seeking to carry out expedient, target group-orientated measures.

Regardless of the multifarious difficulties, the projects have had successes which prove that placement in sustainable employment can also be successful in the interplay between individual care and expedient use of standard instruments:

**Taking Tübingen** as an example (*Bleib in Tübingen!*): The job centre maintains a placement unit tailored to the target groups in the premises of the organisation. The city, the job centre and the asylum centre cooperate in the placement.

**Taking Freiburg** as an example (Freiburg project association for migrants with a refugee background): It was possible for a group of twelve individuals to be placed in low-skilled employment in a newly-established supply company for the automotive industry. The company had previously had good experience with a migrant with a refugee background who was placed by the joint agency.

The three factors of the labour market situation, individual obstacles to placement and the legal framework equally oppose successful labour market integration. Deskilling and a lack of knowledge of the German labour market as a consequence of many years of unemployment are particularly significant here. The lack of formal certification of skills acquired in the country of origin, as well as the lack of recognition of other previously-acquired vocational skills, forces refugees to revert to low-skilled employment.

### **Recommendations in the “work placement” field**

- Joint agencies, opting-out local authorities, job centres and the employment agency still need to improve their knowledge of the circumstances of the new target group and of the complex legal conditions. Individual staff members should be trained so that a counselling process can take place which accommodates the particularities of the target group. Knowledge of vocational recognition procedures and adaptative skill-development should be improved in particular.
- Decision-making practices in the immigration authorities should be orientated towards opening the labour market for asylum-seekers and “tolerated” individuals at an early stage, as is intended in line with the statutory requirements.

### **Thematic field C) Needs-analysis and skill-development**

The field of skill-development has become more and more significant in many projects' activities in the course of the first year of promotion as a result of the considerable demand

because the difficulties which were described in the above chapters increasingly emerged in job placement.

In particular the considerable need for basic skills described by many projects is not currently met by an adequate supply of suitable measures. It was only possible to place a relatively small share of the participants in measures leading to obtaining a qualified vocational qualification by the key date of 15 August 2009 (251 individuals, corresponding to 2.8% of participants).

Other skill-development measures have been taken up by 1,254 participants (14.1% of the total number of participants).

...Moreover, because of the framework conditions that have been described, and of a lack of funding, frequently only short-term, low-threshold skill-development is possible (examples: training as a cashier or as a nursing assistant, fork-lift truck licence). It can be predicted that these measures by themselves will not as a rule provide a key to livelihood-securing employment.

In the networks, 1,509 participants were registered in language courses, roughly 60% of the courses being implemented by the projects themselves and 40% by external providers. Experience suggests that skill-development measures tailored to the target groups frequently take place within the networks and only seldom in standard promotion. The networks have tried out a wide variety of cooperation models with different partners:

Taking **Augsburg** as an example: Augsburg adult education college carried out a skill-development measure in the field of hotels and gastronomy/home economics in which the participants were prepared for their internships with a vocational language course and social-educational coaching, as well as with visits to companies. It was possible to place some of the participants in regular jobs prior to the commencement of the internship phase.

Taking **Berlin** as an example (*bridge network Arbeit und Bildung e.V. – AuB [Work and Training]*): Trained vocational preparation for employment in the field of gastronomy is offered in cooperation with the “*Weltküche*” (World Kitchen) restaurant and catering company. Since the project began in January 2009, participants from the three Berlin networks for migrants with a refugee background (*bridge*) have regularly completed traineeships. This has enabled three trainees to become employees in the “*Kiezkaffee*” (Neighbourhood Café), which is part of the *Weltküche*, with a job which is subject to obligatory social insurance.

### **Recommendations in the field of “Needs-analysis and skill-development”**

- Measures for linguistic promotion are to be better tailored to the target groups. This means in particular also enabling individuals with little knowledge of German to attend courses which can take place prior to or during a vocational measure. Access to integration courses, as well as to the vocational German courses implemented by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, should be opened up for all target groups of the programme.
- Skill-development and accompanying measures (such as application and motivation training courses) should be coordinated in the framework of an individual promotion plan so that they can be implemented in a targeted fashion

and not run in isolation from one another. It should be guaranteed for the duration of such a promotion plan that a residence permit can also be granted in derogation from the general granting preconditions of section 5 of the Residence Act (*AufenthG*). This call goes out in equal measure to educational organisations, joint agencies and the immigration authorities.

### III. Summary and outlook

The following results are observed against the background of the problems described in the above chapter:

**A) Training of young people:** Major difficulties now no longer arise here primarily as a result of the legal frameworks, but of individual obstacles to placement. It takes time to overcome these difficulties and necessitates considerable care on the part of networks and strategic partners.

**B) Job placement:** The three factors of the labour market situation, individual placement obstacles and legal frameworks are equally responsible for problems. The key date arrangement of the “grandfather clause” equally poses difficulties when it comes to the – frequently time-consuming – acquisition of vocational skills, as does the insecure residence status of those target groups who are only “tolerated”. A high degree of care is necessary for successful placement in longer-term employment, as is an amendment of the framework conditions.

**C) Needs-analysis and skill-development:** The standard instruments of labour market promotion only work in individual cases. The “grandfather clause” arrangement and the insecure residence status of people who are “tolerated” are compared to necessary skill-development measures, in particular those which lead to the acquisition of school-leaving or vocational qualifications. The need arises here to tailor measures more closely to the needs of the participants and to the demands of the labour market.

A **Ten-Point Action Plan** to set the stage for the ongoing work of the networks in the regions and *Länder* emerges from the recommendations put forward in the chapter entitled “Networking in practice”, as well as in the thematic fields. At the same time, these points should be taken into account in designing possible future promotion programmes in the regions, as well as at federal level:

#### Action Plan:

##### Expanding networking

1. Networking as a cooperation model should be established regardless of nationwide promotion programmes. To this end, the networks should become a fixed element of programmes which are implemented in the local authorities and the *Länder*.
2. In the framework of the National Thematic Network, technical dialogue is to be optimised with the strategic partners, and its expansion is to be continued in this promotional period by involving further decision-makers. Resources should be

made available for the increased public relations work, and there should be awareness-creation on the part of stakeholders on the labour market.

#### **A) Increasing young refugees' participation in training**

3. Those who are responsible at education offices, vocational training offices and authorities in the local authorities and *Länder* should involve the network partners in a review of the design of school-work transition management with the aim in mind of adapting existing programmes to the circumstances in which young refugees find themselves.

4. With the involvement of decision-makers from the political arena and administration in the regions, as well as of the business community, sustainable training cooperation should be initiated explicitly involving young refugees.

#### **B) Making job placement more efficient**

5. The strategic partners involved in the regions should endeavour to ensure that concrete goal agreements are reached with joint agencies and opting-out local authorities, as well as with the employment agencies, in order to increase the work placement rate of refugees and of placement in measures promoted under the Social Code.

6. Measures should also be agreed here which promote intercultural opening processes and train staff in the job centres and in the agency to compensate for gaps in information.

#### **C) Stepping up skill-development**

7. Language acquisition: In order to coordinate the better use of integration courses and measures for vocational language promotion provided to the target group by the programme of the ESF and of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, those who are responsible for the programme in the regional authorities, the joint agencies and the Federal Office should examine and initiate possibilities for implementation.

8. The implementation of individual promotion plans and the creation of vocational skill-development services should take place on the basis of a targeted survey of the target group's skill-development requirements. This challenge addresses education planners and those responsible at the joint agencies and employment agencies.

#### **Consistently implementing labour market integration of target groups**

9. In order to give more concrete shape to the relaxations for the target groups intended by policy-makers in access to training and the labour market, administrative and social policy statutes and ordinances are to be brought into line with one another. Administrative policy restrictions which clash with the goal of labour market integration should be eliminated or at least shaped by introducing exceptional elements such that taking up employment is not completely ruled out.

10. The implementation of the programme for migrants with a refugee background and of the Action Plan which has been put forward here is heavily dependent on the willingness of the stakeholders in the regions and at federal level to integrate the target groups in the labour market at an early stage and in a sustainable manner. The available margin of appreciation should be used more consistently by the individuals who are responsible in each case.

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