



## Donor conferences - networked support for employment access

Successful format of the project “Integration of professionals in North Saarland (IFK)”, supported by the association “Caritasverband Schaumberg-Blies” in the IQ regional network Saarland



### **IQ | GOOD PRACTICE** to the point

#### **Format of the donor conferences:**

Industry-specific case discussions to dovetail existing programmes that support labour market integration with credential recognition authorities, employment agencies, job centres, chambers, advanced vocational training institutions, immigration authorities and companies

#### **Addressees for transfer:**

Recognition counselling centres in Network IQ, relevant labour market stakeholders, especially from employment agencies and job centres, representatives of the chambers as well as industry and company representatives

#### **Project:**

Integration of professionals (IFK)  
Network IQ Saarland

#### **Support:**

Caritasverband Schaumberg-Blies e.V.

#### **Project management:**

Dr phil. Elena Enda Kreutzer  
Hüttenbergstraße 42, 66538 Neunkirchen  
Ph.: +49 (0)6821 / 920 90  
e.kreutzer@caritas-nk.de

#### **Starting position/challenge**

Based on the ever increasing shortage of skilled workers and the assumption that highly skilled immigrants in Germany are often employed below their qualification during their individual integration process, the “Integration of professionals (IFK)” project, supported by the association “Caritasverband Schaumberg-Blies e.V.”, was developed in the IQ regional network Saarland. The project is aimed at enabling immigrants who usually have foreign academic qualifications to enter the appropriate professional career in Germany, thereby creating a win-win solution for society and immigrants. During counselling and support for those who acquired a foreign university degree or vocational qualification, bureaucratic obstacles as well as language and cultural barriers became very clear within the framework of the project. In order to overcome these barriers and to enable the rapid labour market integration in their profession, so-called donor conferences are convened. These are carried out with the participation of all relevant labour market stakeholders. The case discussions in the donor conferences address the labour market integration of people with a foreign university degree or vocational qualification who may be at different stages in their integration process.

#### **Implementation of the format**

Tight-knit counselling, in terms of case management, was performed in the IFK project in consultation with the Saarland immigration services. Qualification profiles, plans and objectives were established together with the clients. Afterwards, appropriate measures in the areas of adaptation, advanced vocational training, language development and internships were acquired by the project managers for the clients. Furthermore, contacts were established with potential employers. The tailor-made implementations and, at times, very personal arrangements were coordinated and secured in individual discussions with the representatives of those institutions involved in the process of integration before,



during and after the donor conferences. The two-hour donor conferences with these stakeholders, which are held three times a year, ensure the development of tailor-made solutions for the counselling of certain groups of cases. This created a support network with representatives of institutions involved in the integration process. The donor conferences aimed at dovetailing and sustainably improving the coordination of existing support programmes for labour market integration. Another focus was the collaboration with employers in terms of internships and individual qualification opportunities for immigrant professionals. Several sector-specific donor conferences already took place.

#### **Summary**

The experiences prove that the establishment of a tight-knit support that acts both in the sense of counselling and of advocacy provides a structural improvement of the integration of foreign professionals. Donor conferences can make an important contribution to the integration path of these people, because they provide tailor-made strategies for the profession as a whole, which are more reliable than bilateral communication.

**70** people have already benefited from the project

**40** people are working, training or continuing their education



# Donor conference shows its effect

Engineer Atanas Topalov started his career by means of intensive support and the donor conference

“Without Neda I could never have achieved this”. Atanas Topalov is very grateful to Dr Neda Sheytanova, the former head of the “Integration of professionals in North Saarland (IFK)” project, for her support in helping him enter the German labour market. The Bulgarian engineer in heating, ventilation and air conditioning came to Dr Neda Sheytanova through the “Service centre for the development of foreign skills” of the association “saar.is e.V.”. “She provided me with incredible confidence to achieve my goal,” says the 25-year-old. With his technical knowledge, he was able to convince Klaus Lauer, owner of Energy Evaluation, engineering office for supply engineering in Merzig/Saar. In his first working days, however, he realised that he did not know many technical terms and that others did not understand his implementation plans. Thus, he “practised” with his mentor to explain

drawings and improve his German grammar skills. Additionally, an extra-occupational online language course helped him to optimise his business communication skills. For Klaus Lauer and his new employee, however, it was very important that Atanas Topalov use the title “engineer”, since that title is necessary, amongst other things, for the authorisation to sign.

But the result of the examination of his Bulgarian degree by the Chamber of Engineers was taking a long time. „Using the example of Atanas, the format of the donor conference shows its effect“, says Dr Neda Sheytanova. “We invited him to the event, discussed his case with all involved stakeholders and a short time later, he received the recognition of his title from the Chamber of Engineers”. Meanwhile, Atanas Topalov’s trial period is over and he is permanently employed. His boss Klaus Lauer is extremely



A strong team: Atanas Topalov (l.) works together with his colleague Matthias Roth (m.) and his boss, entrepreneur Klaus Lauer (r.).

satisfied with his work and is especially amazed at the pace of his linguistic progress: “If he continues to develop in this manner, I can imagine him as a possible successor to the company”.

Three questions for Dr Neda Sheytanova, the former head of the “Integration of professionals in North Saarland (IFK)” project

## “Personal contact is incredibly important”



### What is the innovative part of donor conferences?

Socio-educational professionals identify the clients’ personal and job-specific obstacles individually through extensive support and counselling. These are generalised in the donor conferences for the respective occupational group and subsequently solutions are found. Trust is created through intensive personal exchange with the strategic steering partners, which enables successful work hand-in-hand. In addition, the format is a door opener with businesses. Businesses can meet potential new employees during skills assessments and internships in their companies.

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### Is it possible to introduce the donor conferences in other regions?

The approach of the donor conferences can be replicated nationwide. It is important that all stakeholders can be convinced to pull together to help people effectively in the labour market integration within their profession. Sufficient manpower is also necessary for the project to ensure extensive support for the clients.

### What can the donor conferences affect in the long term?

Personal contact at donor conferences is incredibly important when it comes to working together and finding solutions and establishing a permanent network. Documents and certificates can be very meaningful, but talking directly from one person to another, is more effective. When we were all sitting together in the afternoon, the problems were often solved very quickly. Incidentally, the donor conferences are a prime example of the IQ process chain, the focus of which is to ensure that support must not end too early and everyone must work together hand-in-hand.

#### Imprint

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**Authors:** Christian Zingel, Christof Scheid  
**Editor:** Christian Zingel, ebb  
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#### Network IQ

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