



Explanatory cards - simply formulated, easily understood

A practical tool for a better understanding in counselling by the association “berami berufliche Integration e.V.” and the job centre in Frankfurt



IQ | GOOD PRACTICE to the point

Explanatory cards tool:

Explanatory cards are an assistive tool which was developed for counselling in job centres. They help to convey complex information gradually by means of visualisation, thus making this information more comprehensible and understandable. Explanatory cards have a dual function: they help counsellors to guide the conversation and to offer simple and clear formulations, thereby improving the clients' understanding. They are particularly suited for structuring standard communicative situations in everyday counselling. So far, there are six explanatory card sets on “residence relocation”, “arrival”, “integration course”, “job application training” and “sanctions”.

Addressees for transfer:

Counsellors in job centres

Project:

SensiBer – speech-sensitive consulting,
Network IQ Hesse

Implementing organisation:

berami berufliche Integration e.V.

Project management:

Claudia Feger
Burgstraße 106
60389 Frankfurt
Ph.: +49 (0)69 / 91301022
feger@berami.de

Starting position/challenge

The project “SensiBer – language-sensitive counselling” by the association “berami berufliche Integration e.V.” in the IQ regional network Hesse qualified employees of the job centre in Frankfurt for a language-sensitive design of the counselling process. On a daily basis, counsellors conduct several counselling sessions, in which they have to instruct clients on complex technical issues, procedures and legal requirements. The amount of information frequently overwhelms clients, especially when they speak German as a foreign or second language. This leads to irritation, misunderstandings and repeated counselling visits. The necessary explanations are often time-consuming for the job centre employees and exhausting for both sides.

Implementation of the tool

The aim of the workshop was to develop materials and strategies for language-sensitive and thus more accessible counselling. In order to base the workshops on real existing needs, the project staff shadowed the work of various job centre departments in advance. The idea of developing the explanatory cards originated as part of the training. The biggest challenge was to reduce the complex legal requirements and the extensive knowledge of the counsellors at the job centre to the most important core messages - without loss of legal precision. It was important to consistently balance professionalism and clarity of the explanatory cards. Several smaller topics are usually included in a counselling situation: these were visualised and recorded in an explanatory card set. In a team effort, recurring themes that often lead to problems of understanding were collected. The prototypes were examined in regards to their professional content by the workshops and their applicability was tested. In the corresponding



explanatory cards, the complex counselling contents are prepared with small steps and are easily formulated, complete and free of redundancy. The cards serve as support in the counselling session, for example to discuss matters such as residence relocation, measures for application training or integration courses, but also in the explanation of possible sanctions. Together with the explanatory cards, checklists were developed, which are handed to the clients and constitute a valuable aid for them. The core information of the counselling session is listed concisely on the checklists as well as on the explanatory cards, e.g. the individual steps or expected documents in the order in which they need to be performed or submitted.

Summary

The core information in the explanatory cards is formulated in simple terms and always visible to clients of the job centre. Counsellors can answer questions more easily by utilising the cards. The system of individual cards makes it easy to remove, adjust or add explanatory cards as needed.



“Very high relevance to daily counselling”

Barbara Onuk, responsible for fundamental issues concerning immigration and social affairs at the job centre in Frankfurt, describes the first practical experiences with the explanatory cards

The explanatory cards are used successfully in the daily counselling sessions by the employees of Frankfurt job centre. “The team leaders in labour market integration were very surprised at how complex contents can be conveyed in a few sentences,” says Barbara Onuk, responsible for fundamental issues concerning immigration and social affairs at the job centre in Frankfurt, who significantly contributed to the development of the tool.

“The explanatory cards were designed in the workshops by the project staff of SensiBer in partnership with job centre employees, and therefore have a very high relevance to daily counselling”. Like any new tool, it requires application in real life and, of course, also practice. “We want to convince people and

involve all heads of division and team leaders, who previously had their own strategies in counselling - ultimately, the explanatory cards are indeed primarily intended as a helpful working tool,” says Barbara Onuk. “The associated checklists are perceived by the clients as very useful”.

The enthusiastic response to the tool could be seen during this year's day of the job centres, where the explanatory cards were ordered in large amounts from all over Germany. By the closing date on 24 March 2016, 275 sets with 6 topics were already sent from the IQ regional network coordination department in Hesse to interested parties throughout Germany.



Three questions for Claudia Feger, head of the project “SensiBer” by the association “beramí berufliche Integration e.V.”

“Can be used for information meetings of all kinds”



What is the innovative aspect of the explanatory cards?

My predecessor as project manager, Dr Meta Cehak-Behrmann, and Barbara Onuk have mastered the challenge with their teams to develop tools and strategies to communicate complex regulatory issues in an easily understandable way. Explanatory cards help to describe difficult concepts in simple language and to communicate in simple terms. The counsellors at the job centre are very

grateful that, thanks to the explanatory cards, they have a tool for conveying basic information on recurrent subjects without incurring into common obstacles of understanding.

Is the instrument easily transferable?

As a communication tool, explanatory cards can be created and used in different contexts for consultation and information meetings of all kinds. Three of the present explanatory card sets capture regularised processes at the job centres that apply nationwide.

How applicable will the explanatory cards be in the long term?

The explanatory cards help to deal with standard situations in everyday counselling in a linguistically clear and purposeful manner. The goal is that important information is presented legibly and in writing during counselling. The clients always have them in view and can easily refer to them. At the end of the session, the explanatory cards are presented in logical order, and the checklist provides the client with the most important information and next steps.

Imprint

The project is funded as part of the Network IQ. It is a subproject of the IQ regional network Hesse

Authors: Christian Zingel, Dr Meta Cehak-Behrmann
Editor: Christian Zingel, ebb
Photos: Network IQ Hesse, beramí e.V., Julia Schlax (RockAByte GmbH)
Layout: Gereon Nolte, ZWH
Version: 2016
www.netzwerk-iq.de

Network IQ

The Network “Integration through Qualification (IQ)” aims at sustainable improvements in the labour market integration of adults with a migration background. The programme is funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Strategic partners in implementing the programme are the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA).

The Network “Integration through Qualification (IQ)” is a programme funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the European Social Fund (ESF).



In cooperation with:

