



## Determining your own path through life

An innovative job training scheme for volunteer counsellors from migrant organisations and communities empowers participants and assesses competencies.



### iQ | GOOD PRACTICE in a nutshell

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

Migrant organisations, labour administrations, counselling centres, training providers and adult education institutions

#### **A job training scheme for volunteer counsellors from migrant organisations and communities:**

The training comprises KomBI career counselling [“KomBI” stands for competence-focused, biographical and intercultural], empowerment training and further training entitled “from counsellor to coach”. It connects migrants working as volunteer counsellors with the aim of improving their opportunities in the labour market. Participants are prepared in how to professionally conduct individual and group counselling in their migrant organisations and communities.

#### **Project:**

Abriendo Puertas – Opening doors

#### **Organisation:**

VIA Bayern e.V.

#### **Project manager**

Maria Virginia Gonzalez Romero  
Landwehrstr. 22 / 80336 Munich  
Tel.: 089/520 332 35  
marvi.gonzalez@via-bayern.de

#### **Provision:**

Further information on the subproject “Abriendo Puertas” is available at [www.via-bayern.de/abriendo-puertas/](http://www.via-bayern.de/abriendo-puertas/).

All previously published IQ Good Practice examples can be found at [www.netzwerk-iq.de](http://www.netzwerk-iq.de).

#### **Starting point/challenge**

People are actively involved as volunteer counsellors in a large number of migrant organisations and ethnic communities. They operate in different cultural contexts and are also able to “translate” these. Their knowledge of the structures, processes and procedures in Germany means that they act as important multipliers, building bridges which help to achieve successful integration in society and in the labour market. In order to strengthen and exploit this potential, job training schemes for volunteer counsellors from migrant organisations and communities were initiated in Network IQ Bavaria – MigraNet.

#### **Implementation of the job training scheme**

In the Network IQ Bavaria – MigraNet, a procedure for assessing competencies entitled “KomBI career counselling” (competence-focused, biographical and intercultural) was developed and implemented on multiple occasions in 2009 as training for full-time counsellors in social institutions and providers. “KomBI career counselling” was assessed by the Warentest Foundation as the best of eleven tested competence assessment procedures. It provides counsellors with the tools of the trade for supporting individuals in the development of their professional prospects. Taking this as the starting point, managers of the subproject “Abriendo Puertas” at the organisation VIA Bayern e.V. designed the training for volunteer counsellors with a migration background in 2012. It is made up of “KomBI career counselling” which is translated into different languages, empowerment training and additional training entitled “From counsellor to coach”. The empowerment training is the main focus of the job training scheme. The content includes education on emancipation and social justice as an approach to diversity. Participants have the option, for example, of attending sem-



inars on recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, on project management, and on the Recognition and Immigration Acts. Over the 17 days of the training, the scheme also prepares participants for project management and for delivering individual and group counselling. The goal is not simply for participants to learn new methods but also — using the training’s approach of self-reflection — to set in motion a sustainable learning process and to work on one’s own personal approach. Participants also develop strategies, including on how to deal with racist behaviour, as part of the continuing training.

#### **Conclusion**

Volunteer counsellors from migrant organisations and communities represent an important resource for integration work in society and in the workplace. This is because, following their training, they provide even greater support to the self-help systems within informal networks. This makes an important contribution to improving the social participation of migrants and of the people for whom they provide counselling.

# “Professional and long-term support”

**Training and empowerment enable greater opportunities in the labour market.**

“For me counselling previously meant people in our community coming to me, asking me a question and me having to provide the answer immediately. The way I see it today is that the individual should find their own way. (...) I tease out their strengths so that they become proactive and are therefore able to do this. I'm a source of support, but not the one who determines the destiny of others.” This is how counsellor Mathilda Legitimuschleicher describes her empowerment training in the context of the “From counsellor to coach” training. The approach at the heart of the empowerment training involves releasing an individual's existing competencies to create powerful and effective resources. These then enable the individuals to determine their own path

through life for themselves and to shape the way they live. This provides volunteer counsellors with methods enabling them to organise counselling in a structured and professional manner. “Our vision is that these



key individuals also gain greater opportunities in the labour market as a result of the training and empowerment,” emphasises project manager Maria Virginia Gonzalez Romero. The intention is to provide volunteer counsellors with professional support concerning vocational orientation and career planning. The aim is that this professional and long-term support will help them to become proactive in determining the direction in which to take their lives, and in organising this and making it happen. Maria Virginia Gonzalez Romero: “This is an important contribution to improving the social participation of these front-line workers and of the people who they counsel on a voluntary basis in migrant organisations and communities.”

Three questions for Maria Virginia Gonzalez Romero, project manager of Abriendo Puertas – Opening doors in the Network IQ Bavaria — MigraNet

## “Strengthening social participation”



### *What is innovative about the job training scheme?*

The innovative aspect of the training measure is the combination of “KomBI career counselling” competence assessment, empowerment training and implementation in the native language. This reflects all of the core competencies of migration-specific guidance. The fact that the training not only

benefits the volunteer counsellors but that it also improves the social participation of the individuals to whom they provide counselling is also innovative.

### *Is the content of the job training scheme easily transferable to other regions?*

The content is relevant to all counsellors in migrant organisations and communities and can be transferred easily. Our training has already been transferred to the Network IQ Saxony-Anhalt. Syrian migrants are already working full-time in the initial reception centre for refugees following their training as “KomBI career counsellors”. This shows that the job training scheme can also be transferred to other federal states.

### *What can the job training scheme achieve over the long term?*

The reflective approach of the training means that participants work on their own personal approach and that a long-term learning process is initiated which enables them to take specific practical steps following the training. Once they have completed their continuing education to become trained coaches, they are then able to commence work appropriate to their level of education as counsellors. They also act as multipliers and at the same time as role models for people in their communities.

#### **Imprint**

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**Authors** Christian Zingel, Maria Virginia Gonzalez Romero

**Editors:** Christian Zingel, Canan Ulug (ebb GmbH)

**Photos/Illustration:** VIA Bayern e.V., Julia Schlax (RockABYTE GmbH)

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#### **Network IQ**

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