

Motivation for entering the labour market

Group counselling for female refugees in cooperation with labour administrations



IQ | GOOD PRACTICE
in a nutshell

Addressees for transfer:

Counselling centres, job centres and employment agencies

Event format for the group counselling of women refugees:

The event format provides women refugees who have children up to three years of age with easy-to-access vocational guidance in group counselling. Close cooperation with the equal opportunities officers (BCA) from the labour administrations makes it possible to provide specific support for women at an early stage as they make their way into the labour market. In addition to this, workshops take place both with and in job centres and employment agencies, as well as at regional women's groups, in women's language courses or in nurseries. Six different modules are offered addressing all aspects relating to women and gainful employment.

Project:

Vocational orientation counselling for refugee women in shared accommodation and reception facilities

Organisation:

Women's Employment Situations Network [Frauennetzwerk zur Arbeitssituation e.V.]

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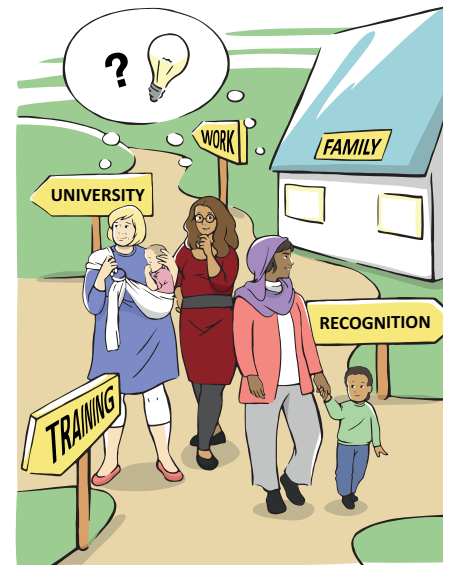
The "Group counselling for women refugees" flyer is available to download at www.iq-netzwerk-sh.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/2017/Berufliche_Orientierung_fuer_Frauen.pdf. All previously published IQ Good Practice examples can be found at www.netzwerk-iq.de.

Starting point/challenge

Refugee women face particular challenges when it comes to integration in society and in the labour market. After arriving in Germany, their priorities are often childcare and other family concerns. For them, their own requirements such as learning the German language or starting work are generally of less importance to begin with. Based on Section 10 of the German Social Code Book II (SGB II), clients with children do not have to formally make themselves available to the employment service in the job centres for up to three years. The consequence of this is that female refugees often do not take advantage of the standard provision under SGB II until much later. In order to reach and support this target group at an early stage, it makes sense to provide accessible information on training and gainful employment and to combine this with childcare.

Implementation of the event format

Together with the equal opportunities officers from the job centre in the Stormarn district of Schleswig-Holstein, those responsible for the subproject "Vocational orientation counselling for refugee women" in the IQ Network Schleswig-Holstein developed relevant topics on labour market integration for refugee women with children under three years of age. To start with, the IQ subproject ran the group counselling on-site in shared accommodation and reception facilities. At the invitation of job centres, the group counselling has been taking place since autumn 2017 in job centres and in employment agencies themselves, as well as in regional women's groups, women's language courses and nurseries, so that refugee women who do not live centrally can also be reached. Covering all aspects regarding women and gainful employment, the group counselling is largely organised in workshops with the support of interpreters and consists of up to six different modules. The titles of the



subjects covered are "The role of women and gainful employment", "Education and training", "Pathways into training and gainful employment", "Competencies" and "The importance of work". The sixth module "Rights and discrimination in employment" involves counselling on anti-discrimination and on empowerment for refugee women. The module is run by the Schleswig-Holstein-based IQ subprojects "The right to fight against discrimination" and "Fair integration in Schleswig-Holstein".

Conclusion

The cooperation and engagement with the job centres' equal opportunities officers has proved to be the key to maximising accessibility to the women and to implementing the group counselling — four further job centres have already expressed great interest in the event format. The success of the group counselling sessions, however, is also a result of the standardised childcare and the support from the interpreters. Women with the same native language are invited to the group discussions as translating into just one language per workshop has proven to be most effective.

Organising professional futures successfully

Refugee women discuss their individual processes regarding labour market integration

The excellent connections which the project organiser Women's Employment Situations Network [Frauennetzwerk zur Arbeitssituation e.V.] has with labour administrations, training providers and associations means that the accessible event format can be implemented flexibly at a local level. For example, one workshop involving ten refugee women from Syria took place in a nursery as this was the best place for childcare to be provided during the workshop. The running of the events was planned in a series of preparation meetings by Hilke Oltmanns, IQ counsellor, and Irene Schumann, equal opportunities officer from the Stormarn job centre. "We are now a finely tuned team!" explains Hilke Oltmanns. She is responsible for starting off the workshop and getting to

know each other while Irene Schumann offers the job centre perspective and gives information in particular on the priorities of childcare, language courses and training options. Above all, the women come with questions on prospects, education and



training systems, occupational fields in Germany, pathways to further training and qualifications, on setting up businesses, on working independently, and on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications. They discuss their individual processes regarding labour market integration. On each occasion, the group develops its own dynamics, and a lively sharing of experiences ensues. "In terms of the German language, the groups are very heterogeneous and for this reason we work a lot using images and graphics," emphasises project manager Stefanie Kohlmorgen. "Many women want to complete a language course in order to be able to start training. However, childcare is an important factor and there is clearly a high level of demand for this."

Three questions to Hilke Oltmanns, counsellor in the subproject "Vocational orientation counselling for refugee women" in the IQ Network Schleswig-Holstein

"Early activation makes sense"



What is innovative about the event format?

The target group of refugee women with children under the age of three is difficult to reach via public provision, in addition to which there had previously been no provision in place for them. The close collaboration with the job centres' equal opportunities officers enables us to reach the female refugees successfully and by innovative

means. The purpose of this is to highlight professional prospects to them at an early stage as part of effective group counselling. The job centres actively seek contact with the women by issuing invitations nationwide, and are there with us at a local level as organisers. Combined with the standardised child care during the workshop and the opportunities in place to make ourselves understood effectively with the aid of interpreters, these opportunities for targeted contact at an early stage represent an innovative success model.

Is the format easily transferable?

Because there are equal opportunities officers in job centres nationwide, it is possible to transfer this format across all federal states. Far more equal opportunities officers in Schleswig-Holstein have become aware of our event format and would also like to use this in their areas of responsibility. The workshop topics might be split up further and adapted to individual requirements, and additional development workshops are being planned. This format is also transferable for other topics and target groups.

What can the workshops achieve over the long term?

Early activation makes sense in order to help women commence work. The contact with mothers in the group counselling made it possible to pick up on specific counselling requirements from the workshops and to specifically refer them, for example, to the local recognition counselling centres or networks. Since representatives from the respective job centres are always present at the workshops, it is possible to resolve more in-depth issues in further counselling discussions.

Imprint

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Network IQ

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