

TCA Germany, “Bridges to Employment”

What this workshop is about...

In this workshop we would like to discuss with you how “bridges to employment” can be built for refugees. We would like to especially discuss what the educational sector can do to support their integration in the labour market which may be regarded as the most important basis for social integration and individual well-being. There will be two leading perspectives on the topic; first a national perspective, second a transnational perspective.

1) National perspective: the debate in Germany

These days in Germany the issue of “asylum” (as an approach of humanitarian aid) in a lot of public debates is connected with national aspirations of economic growth (to absorb negative effects of the so-called shortage of skilled workforce). But currently nobody knows whether this will be successful.

It is quite clear that the success on the labour market predominantly depends on the educational level – this counts for asylum-seekers as it counts for others as well, and, interestingly enough, this is **particularly true for asylum-seekers**. There is empiric evidence that investment in human capital is even **more important among asylum-seekers than among migrants in general** in terms of entrances to the jobs and labour markets.

So every investment in educational improvements will have its return sooner or later. But this may last a couple of years. According to recent studies the current asylum-seekers in Germany mainly don't have a completed

apprenticeship (70%) (or rather a proper vocational training of about years of duration), while only smaller groups possess intermediate vocational qualifications (16%) and university degrees (14%).¹ So it seems to be a bit unrealistic or overambitious that refugees will be able to close a gap on the labour market.²

We would like to point out five key features with regard to our theme “bridges to employment” for **refugees in Germany**:

- Are refugees allowed to work? Recognized (statutory) refugees are allowed to work, but asylum-seekers are not allowed to work for 3 months and up to 15 months there exists the so-called “priority-review”, which means that the asylum-seeker may only get a job if there is nobody from Germany or the EU with equal qualifications for the vacant position.
- Do we have a labour shortage in Germany? Only in very exotic jobs. The labour administration publishes lists of so-called “shortage-occupations” and the refugees with these qualifications may get a job. But these jobs are pretty exotic like cold-storage-guards, underwater-welding or hearing-instruments-professional and it is necessary that the foreign qualifications are approved in Germany.
- Is there any chance to get a job without language skills? In nearly all sectors it is extremely important to have at least basic language skills. Only in very simple working activities like large-scale catering or

¹ SOEP-Migrationsstichprobe in: BWP 1/2016. Die Bedeutung von Bildung und Spracherwerb für die Arbeitsmarktintegration von Asylsuchenden.

² Michael Vollmer, Determining Labour Shortages and the need for Labour Migration in Germany. Focus-Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN), Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2015.

cleaning-services there is no need for language capabilities – but there is not much perspective for a career either.

- Do refugees on the labour market compete with Germans? Regarding simple jobs there is a competition, but a) only on a pretty low scale until today and b) the competition is more located between refugees and other migrants living in Germany than between refugees and Germans.
- Will refugees close the gap for “skilled workers” in Germany? As most of the refugees are pretty young people, it is not very likely that most of the refugees belong to the “skilled workers” that are demanded in Germany.

2) Transnational perspective: Can European experiences be a source for national solutions?

We think this is not only possible, but it is more necessary than ever. We urgently need to learn from existing solutions in Europa. We need to look beyond our national boundaries and need to look at the bigger picture – even when we think that dealing with refugees is just a national or regional issue. This is only in parts correct. Although the national conditions dominate and define the problems and solutions of asylum, migration and integration in the single countries, migration is a European issue and a global issue, too.

The number of violent conflicts with political, ethnic or religious backgrounds has been growing over the last years. According to UNHCR in 2014 there have been nearly 60 Mio people on the move in a global perspective. In Europe and in Germany the migration issue increased

massively in the 2nd half of 2015. So the answer would be: European experiences can be and should be looked at when national entities are dealing with migration as a European and global problem.

But is an E&T-project big enough and important enough to influence politics?

In the last decades there has **not** been a strong debate about migration topics. And without a public debate there is no distribution of knowledge and know-how.³ Because of this we Europeans did **not** develop exhaustive knowledge about migration and integration in the past. We unfortunately did **not** build up sufficient capacities and competences on how to deal with hundreds of thousands of people on the move in today's societies. So we urgently have to start this process of accumulation of broad knowledge and suitable hands-on-practices.

And to look at good practices is the best way to influence debates and to broaden own perspectives. **Any transnational project** from education and training may be a **smart channel to distribute valuable knowledge** and competences if it is disseminated and distributed widely.

So, let's start this process.

³ Sinah Grotefels, Sabine Schmidt-Peter, Interview: "Diversität als gesellschaftliche Ressource. URL: <http://www.bpb.de/dialog/222776/interview-diversitaet-als-gesellschaftliche-ressource>