

## Coaching and counselling as an extension to public service employment

All project participants, who contributed to public service work in the municipalities, were offered a collateral occupational coaching. This coaching had the aim to create a portfolio out of a “competence balance”, a personal guideline for the further occupational perspectives, which can be, in case of granting of asylum (that is the main requirement in order to enter the labour market), build up upon.

In this competence balance, formal and informal competences and experience as well as personal and professionally relevant skills and qualification of a person get reported. The portfolio includes existing qualifications, possible occupational fields and ideas about qualifications still to be gathered.

Motivational training under professional supervision brought the possibility for asylum seekers to do a close examination of personal work motives as well as regional labour market culture. The asylum seekers received information about possibilities on the Austrian labour market and a feedback about their skills and still-to-be-developed potentials. This way, the self-perception was extended and a realistic estimation of their professional perspectives in Austria was given to them.

Problems during the coaching process emerged from the fact that project participants found it hard to get in tune with their future situation (that is, a positive course of their asylum process and the aperture of the labour market), as the temporal incidence of the latter is not to be estimated. This is the reason why not all of the participants could actually make targeted and suggestive use of the coaching. In the course of the design of the coaching, gender equality and female coaches with gender competence for female participants were thought of. Important in this area is the considerateness towards different cultural backgrounds.

In order to cater for the individual conditions in a meaningful way, an individual coaching makes more sense than a group coaching. As an accompanying measure to public service work it has proved successful to offer a coaching unit every two or three weeks. After having completed their collaboration in the field of public service work and after termination of their coaching, all participants received a “recommendation letter”, a descriptive confirmation of attendance, as well as a competence balance and a personal portfolio to help them with their further professional integration.

### Motivation and self-management

For asylum seekers who are executing public service work, an individually harmonised coaching can be a meaningful support to them. Asylum seekers receive support in the fields of motivation and self-management, they can, together with the coach, draw a balance over their hitherto collected experience and knowledge and consult their expectations in the Austrian labour market. In case of transfer to the regular labour market they can regress to their competence balance and their portfolio, which should contain existing skills and possible occupational fields as well as ideas about qualifications still to be gathered. Equally, supporting authorities and organisations (labour market service, social welfare office, integration projects and so on) can build up on the competence balance and the portfolio.

### Possible coaching contents:

- Core competences in the working world (existing skills, qualifications, trainings)
- Proposals to extend core competences (further education, formal recognition of already existing education)
- Occupational possibilities on the Austrian labour market
- Schooling- and other education possibilities in Austria
- General conditions of working in Austria
- Handling of conflict situations in work and school
- Formulation of learning- and life goals
- Encouragement to professional integration
- Approximation to Austrian culture
- Discussion of different cultural basic values

## Material

- Competence balance
- Portfolio

Samples of such competence balances and a personal portfolio were created and field-tested by FluEqual and are also available ready to download on our homepage ([www.fluequal.at](http://www.fluequal.at)).

### Coaching experiences

Mister P, citizen of an East European country, has applied for asylum in Austria at the end of 2004. His application is currently in the process of appeal. At the start of the project, Mister P. frequented an intensive German language course, which he concluded with very good success. Afterwards he got the chance to collect first work experience by means of public service employment. At the same time, he could receive an individual coaching, harmonised with his personal situation.

At the beginning, Mister P. felt quite sceptical towards the coaching. He seemed friendly, showed himself motivated, r communicated however little information. His German knowledge was relatively good, more and more times he would take over the role of the synchronised translator in the situation of a group coaching. After some coaching units he somewhat seemed to warm up, which led to much better results in the individual coaching.

At the moment, Mister P. is working in a very dedicated manner at a building yard of the municipality where he is lives, he does sport, is trying to collect some IT knowledge and is conserving his optimistic attitude. He describes himself as modest and is happy with what he has available. After the examination of “Austrian culture and living habits”, Mister P. shows himself very interested in an exchange of cultural differences and living habits. In the meantime he has created a big circle of friends and acquaintances.

In the course of the coaching process and through the creation of the competence balance and the portfolio, his versatile potential possibilities in Austria became visible, not least for himself. During his mission in public service employment it became obvious that in Austria there is an existing demand for his qualifications. The according occupational fields were made visible by analysing the results from his competence balance created during the coaching.

His versatile technical knowledge as well as his language competence are a good base for integration in the Austrian labour market.