

## Career guidance

Migrants' employment influences many relevant issues such as economic independence, planning for the future, socializing with members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, strengthen self-esteem and encourage self-reliance. So career guidance is a strategic means for the social inclusion of newcomers. According to the approach of Life Designing Paradigm (Savickas, 2009) emphasis shall be put on the whole career story (pre and post migration) of the person through narratives around life themes.

It is of paramount importance to avoid the mistake to consider the newcomer as s/he would be a "new person" having no past and being in need of a standardized accompanying service. The newcomer must be welcomed in his/her entirety and his/her story is to be taken into account. This mistake may arise from the migrant's behaviour as newcomers generally tend to reset all what they have done in the origin or crossing country. After the first reception phase, when they are ready for social and labour inclusion, when they are asked about their educational qualification, they may answer proudly they achieved the O-level in the host country, even if they had secondary or tertiary education in their origin country. They tend to valorise their eighth-degree graduation because it is an achieved goal in the host country, being unaware that it is the lowest education qualification in Europe and it is not so strategic to find a job. This wrong perception may be induced by the fact that when arriving in the new country they are pushed by professional accessors to get the eighth-grade in order to acquire a basic knowledge of the local language, which is surely their first important objective, but just a preliminary goal. So during the background analysis and the first interviews it is recommended to underpin the whole project they will have to do in order to get a job, clarifying the meaning of all the steps and helping them valorise all pre-migration experiences.

Getting to know with their origin background is extremely necessary to valorise pre-migration experience in order to deliver a proper career guidance. The narrative approach is very important and effective to let the migrants express themselves and explore their new identity, which is not fixed, but a project to be developed within the new social context.

This is not really a skill assessment yet, but a prior social interaction phase where migrants, by telling their life story can rethink it, thus satisfying the need to reconstruct their sense of identity, in view of searching for a new career where they can successfully combine the cultural context of both the host country and of the origin one.

Experience suggests to use a free interview based on the following key questions:

Key questions	Tips
What have you done so far? In your home country? In other	It is good to start with a simple conversation and let topic comes up naturally Respect privacy and use empathy (instead of asking "why did you leave

crossing countries? Did you attend school? If so, what did you study?	your home country?" you might ask "Have you been able to settle in here?"  Try to avoid a too assertive tone which might be perceived as too aggressive
What do you bring here from what you have done?	It may be useful to make them think about an object in which they can identify before and after the departure  Refugee is a legal status, not a human status! Use the word "refugee" with care: someone may not appreciate this label as a primary identifier while others prefer to maintain this identity.
What would you like to do?	Approach questions with sensitivity (especially in case of language barrier or lack of a mediator)  Questioning on legal status information is necessary in terms of working permit and social services offering.  Asking refugees if they plan to stay in the country or leave abroad might be perceived as uncomfortable  The first concern of a newcomer is to have enough money to send it back to his/her family. So a possible answer might be "I would like to do any job". In this case the interviewer may ask more specific questions using an exploring communication permitting the interviewee to express his/her knowledges, abilities, values and expectations. As in a game, the person opens up little by little.  Job cards with pictures and simple texts in multi-languages may be useful for low-skilled migrants and refugees who have no good language skills.
Why would you like to do that?	Do not make assumption: avoid stereotypes! Refugees, like everyone, want to grow personally and professionally.  "Why" questions helps to explore the interviewee's cultural values and personal points of view.

This interview defines a possible path between what is desired and what is possible and realistic at the moment, e.g. if the migrant desires to work as a social/health worker, it will be necessary to agree that this is a good medium-long term goal and in the meantime it is necessary to enhance weaknesses (language skills, work knowledge, etc.) and valorize strengths (transversal skills, previous experience, etc.). Using the "metaphor of the glass" to understand how full is his/her glass of possibilities, so as to define the further steps to fill the gap in order to achieve the general goal. It is in a way dealing with half-filled glasses instead of half-empty glasses, making visible and value all the opportunities and barriers. It is strongly important the migrant understands the inner obstacle (language, soft skills) and external ones (host context rules) from the beginning and has a clear vision of the whole long process of working inclusion. Cf. **Card "Glass of possibilities"**.

Defying sub-goals may be useful to track the paths and valorise all successful steps, thus working on the migrants' self-esteem. It is of paramount importance to boost the migrant's awareness of his/her own strengths and weaknesses and raise their need of introspection.

The newcomer has no familiarity with the host rules and working system and must be taken to discover it step by step, defining a life project with sub-goals and main objectives. A major barrier to employment is the impossibility to produce proof of previous qualifications and, even when this is

possible, employers may not recognize them. So the migrant needs to be informed about any possibilities available in the host country of recognition and validation of his/her formal, non-formal or informal prior learning and about existing specific services. At the same time newcomers shall be acquainted with the characteristics of the local labour market, entrepreneurial environment (typology and size of companies), main economic sectors and clusters, requirements for specific professions.

As a matter of fact, prior professional backgrounds are often misunderstood in the new country and not every experience is automatically transferable from one country to another; this is not only due to the different system in recognition of qualifications and competences, but also to different law and social rules: working as an electrician in Europe requires a specific craft license (permit) and working as a tailor in Mali may be not the same to do that in a EU country.

Many migrants are expected not to be familiar with concept of competences and the Curriculum Vitae or portfolio of competences as tools to self-promote themselves on the labour market. So trainers and language teachers are required to transmit the importance of competences in job searching (knowledge, experience, personal attitudes and values, hard and soft skills), how they can be included in a CV and how to give them visibility during a job interview. Many active group activities, simulations and role playing may be used to make migrants aware on “what they are able to”, “in which context”, “how to successfully self-promote”, “how to learn from an unsuccessful job interview”. Such activities may be carried out also during a language course with the purpose to combine learning of technical and specific work language, learning of local working cultural codes and learning of specific techniques of active job search. The migrant must be put in his/her story, his/her time and his/her working perspective.

The following step will consist in the assessment of hard and soft skills.

## Resources

- AGER A., STRANG A., 2008. Understanding Integration: A conceptual Framework. Journal of Refugee Studies 21(2)
- *The Listen Manual*, Learning from Intercultural storytelling, Erasmus+ project 2016-1-DE02-KA204-003341
- Lighthouse project, Erasmus+, 2016, *Lighthouse Guidebook*: Innovative strategies and technique in career guidance and counselling for migrants.
- SAVICKAS, 2009.
- *Valorize High Skilled Migrants project*, Erasmus+ 2016, MOSSA, the Model of soft skills Assessment & MOSP, the Model of promotion and self-promotion.



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