

9 Conversations: Network building for self-employment of refugees

<https://9conversations.no>

Project funded under ERASMUS+
(Action K204: Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education)

Refugee flows across Europe, especially after 2015, have increased significantly. Many European Member States, in the context of integration policy for refugees in local societies, organise training programs in the corresponding national language. The immediate next step is refugees permanently established in one Member State to join the labor market. Some northern European countries, such as Denmark, are pursuing a policy of helping refugees learn the language through employment, notably in the context of specific funded programs, so that they can join the labor market at an early stage of their establishment to the country.

Other Member States, particularly in the South such as Greece and Italy, where refugee arrivals are dramatically larger, are forced to concentrate their efforts mainly on saving people arriving on dramatic conditions and taking care for their basic needs such as medical care and accommodation. A common fact with regard to these countries is that most of the refugees consider them as entry points having as target for their establishment some country of Northern Europe.

Whatever the national policy, there is a stage, two or three years after their arrival, when refugees cease to attract adequate support. At this stage many still do not have sufficient linguistic knowledge to be able to easily enter the labor market. Due to this fact (as well as due to other issues), the unemployment rate for refugees is remarkably higher compared to other segments of the population.

The Goal of the 9 Conversations Project

Recognising the fact that some of the refugees already have business experience in their country of origin, the goal of the 9Conversations project is to help them set up their own business in the host country by providing them with a training program that takes into account both the specific national requirements and procedures for setting up a business (mainly personal or small) and the general principles of operation and funding. This program can, of course, also be addressed to refugees without previous experience.

Another reason that reinforces the above approach is the observation that many employers could more easily agree to assign a service to a refugee company than go ahead with a full employment status.



The Training Program of the 9 Conversations Project

To achieve the above goal, an on-demand e-learning training package will be developed, which can be completed by refugees either personally or preferably in small teams face-to-face. The approach to be followed will be to encourage participants to learn by communicating with local business consulting services and where feasible, with financial and legal experts. This will contribute to the development of professional networks deprived of refugees as well as to the provision of essential knowledge for starting a small business.

The above e-learning package, the relevant accompanying manual-user guide as well as the pilot application and testing are of the main deliverables of the project. The analysis of the requirements of the training package and its pilot implementation will be attempted in collaboration with refugee supporting organisations and structures in the Member States represented in the project. Upon completion of the project, the training material and the accompanying user guide will be available to the relevant refugee support agencies of the partner countries of the project and more widely to EU member states.

9 Conversations Project Partners

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