

Counselling Refugees means Modernising Counselling

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Counselling refugees means modernising counselling. Findings and outputs of the Erasmus+ funded project „Counselling for Refugee and Migrant Integration into the Labour Market – Development of Courses for Higher Education and Public Employment Services“ (CMinaR), Mannheim 2019

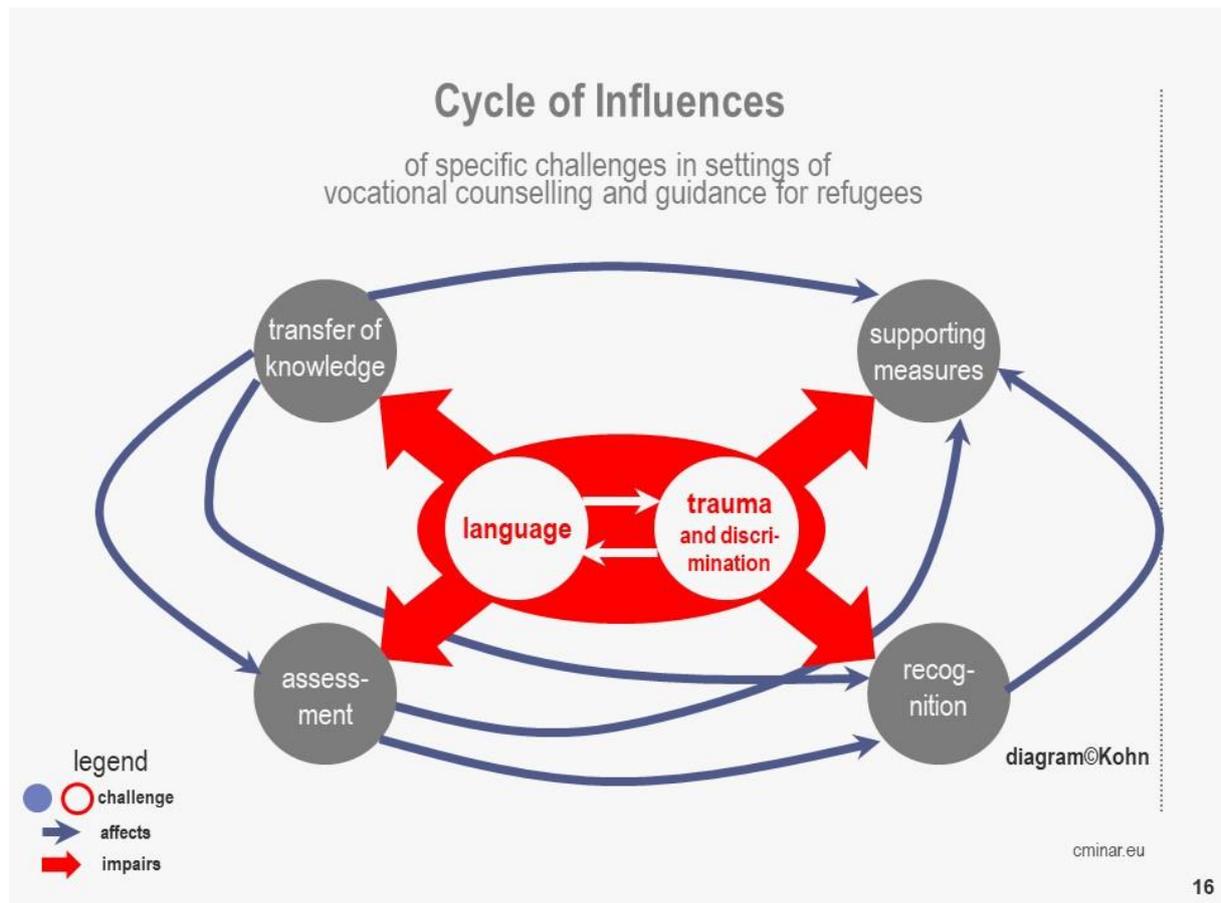
Dear reader,

in your hands you hold a compilation of the results from the CMinaR project. Quite a few people had difficulties pronouncing our project name during the three years of the project. I think we would do that differently today: make the acronym more pronounceable. It was to be reminiscent of the word "seminar". Because that was our main focus. Courses of academic education and further training for counsellors in education, professions and employment were to emerge and now have.

Occasion and prehistory

Starting in 2015, Europe faced exceptional flight migration. This, combined with the basic attitude that even (in the best case only) temporary refugees should be integrated into the societies and employment systems of their host countries from the outset, resulted in a new need for competence and thus qualification for employment-oriented counselling: How to advise when we - counsellors and those seeking advice - do not speak the same mother tongue? How do we advise when we know little or nothing about the education system and the labour markets of our counterparts? How, if our cultural education and our socialisation have until recently taken place in societies far apart from each other? How can we also advise when an "elephant comes into the consultation room" - and it hears the name "I have experienced the worst!"?

These and similar questions were asked by employment-oriented counsellors at the time. And they have been asking these questions ever since. The following diagram was created in these days months at the University of Applied Labour Studies in Mannheim, Germany. It shows the specific challenges in employment-oriented counselling of refugees and how they interact with each other.



Transfer of knowledge stands for challenges resulting from a specific knowledge disadvantage about the other's education and employment system.

Assesment stands for challenges arising from the analysis of potential and the task of empowerment.

Recognition stands for challenges arising from the residence status in the host country and from the (formal) recognition of professional certificates acquired abroad.

Supporting measures are challenges related to access to vocational training and the labour market and measures to promote and support labour market integration.

These challenges already reinforce each other, as the slimmer arrows in the graph show. However, language and trauma & discrimination are at the centre of the challenges. Both hurdles and inhibitions in communication are strongly interwoven. And with their dual power, they also create impairments for coping with all the aforementioned challenges.

Intention

These considerations initially arose heuristically on the basis of research undertaken with focus on earlier migration groups. It was now necessary to put these heuristics on a new empirical basis, now corresponding to the new migration and in cross-national survey. On the other hand, the second step was to generate study content built on this basis with which advisors in academic training and experienced advisors can adjust to the new challenges and develop the necessary competencies in their professional further training. These project goals may be regarded as ambitious.

The team

The possibility of funding through the Erasmus+ programme makes it possible to tackle ambitious projects with the combined efforts of several partners. And it makes it possible to pool experience from different European countries - experience from science and practice. Six European expert institutions have joined forces to address the issue of modernising training for guidance counsellors by adapting it to the needs of refugees seeking advice. Different approaches to guidance and counselling training were to be brought together. Different temporal and geographical places in the migration flow of refugees seeking protection were to be taken into account. Different experiences and approaches in the integration of new immigrants were to be taken into account. And it needed a strong partner who could implement all the content to be worked out in an information-technically experienced way.

This is how our team in CMinaR came into being: Canterbury Christ Church University, the German University of Applied Labour Studies, Istanbul Teknik Universitesi, Kauno Technologijos Universitetas, Università degli Studi di Padova and Stockholms Universitet.

The empirical basis

A sound empirical basis was needed in order to design our study programmes with which consultants can prepare for the new flight-specific challenges. To this end, a comprehensive search was undertaken for available scientific sources in the field. In view of the broad horizon of relevant topics on all the challenges mentioned, on counselling theory in general and on the didactics of suitable educational offers, this was not an easy undertaking. You will find a summary of our results in Chapter 2 of this volume.

The second pillar of our empirical basis is our own Delphi survey of experts from vocational counselling and teaching on this field of action in the participating project countries. We wanted to know: If you imagine the specific tasks in counselling refugees and if you imagine how you could best prepare for them: What educational content would you like to see for this? The results provided impressive details of the extent of the challenges outlined at the beginning. These results can be found in a summary in Chapter 3 of this book.

Our study programmes

This empirical basis was also the basis of our content-related and didactic considerations and discussions. We devoted ourselves to - almost - all the wishes and challenges described - with the exception of the topic of traumatisation. The diversity of our professional experience and expertise in the team allowed us to work on the required comprehensive canon. However, we did not have the indispensable knowledge to deal with the important and professionally demanding topic of trauma in counselling; we had to admit this to ourselves. And so in our study programmes this so important topic unfortunately also remains the "elephant in the room". And it would be a great wish for us if experts on this subject were to extend our study courses with appropriate content and didactics.

What we then ended up designing is a total of six course modules:



Higher Education Course didactical framework and course units



In the fourth and most comprehensive chapter of this book, you can study in detail what lies behind these module headings, what contents we have developed and compiled here, and what didactic considerations we propose to implement them with. The Higher Education Course presented there is something like the heart of our work in CMinaR.

The first results

Our drafts for a study course (Chapter 4) and for a course of further training of experienced counsellors (Chapter 5) are offers to the European professional world of employment-oriented counselling. We hope that these contents and methods can be incorporated into the training and further education of counsellors, that they can be extended, that they can be adapted to the respective local conditions and that they enrich the professionalism of all of us. Of course, we do not dare doing this without having tested our programmes beforehand. And so the CMinaR project's work programme also included both courses being tested as pilots in each of the partner countries involved. You will find the results of these pilot runs, the feedback from the students and teachers involved, in Chapter 7. And if you would like to make concrete use of our offers yourself, you will find all (teaching) materials on this in our publicly accessible media portal: structural lesson plan, work sheets, presentations, videos. The portal is presented in chapter 6 of this volume.

And why now does counselling refugees mean modernising counselling?

European societies are becoming increasingly diverse. Our economies have long been closely intertwined globally - and have thus produced the prosperity we enjoy today. So there are also workers from third countries coming into our economies, whether as employees of globally active companies or as specifically recruited specialists - also to support our demographically shrinking populations and to help us maintain and expand this prosperity. So far, this influx has been rather sparse.

However, there are also many immigrants coming for humanitarian reasons, to whom we see ourselves committed in Europe as a community of values. The fact that the persecuted and the needy are to be welcomed and supported belongs at the heart of the European history of values. In many cases, however, this attention does not remain altruistic. It is not unusual for people who have temporarily sought refuge to want or have to stay. They often become permanent neighbours in our populations - and thus in the end also part of the high potential in our economic cycles.

It is very difficult to predict which of the two migratory flows will develop at what speed and to what extent. However, it is more than likely that the overall trend towards greater diversity will continue. European societies therefore do well to prepare themselves for the integration of new neighbours as a permanent task - for social and economic reasons. For successful integration, the individually appropriate and thus also rather successful path in education, training and employment is an essential key. In turn, the appropriate professional advice can clearly support this process, in many cases even trigger it in the first place.

If we become more competent in successfully advising new immigrants from other countries and cultures, then we will also support the modernisation of our societies and our economies. And we help Europe to credibly defend its values. Alignment with the group of refugees is a great opportunity that is to be seized.