



Transparency and Self-employment
for migrant workers through
Assessment Center

GIVECOMPETENCEACHANCE



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



NEWSLETTER N.1



Project:

GC-AC Give Competence A Chance

Transparency and Self-employment for migrant workers through
Assesment center

Agreement n.:

LLP-LDV/TOI/O9/IT/0504

Beneficiary:

Provincia di Perugia

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Both women and migrants represent underprivileged categories in the European job market. Therefore, being a woman and a migrant provokes a double disadvantage. Being a migrant means that one has to cope with the obstacles related to different backgrounds. Problems with language, lack of familiarity with a job market of the host country, social marginalization are often the obstacles of the positive integration process. Those two groups, even if it happens in different ways, face the problems like discrimination and the lack of recognition of the proper competences and qualifications which occurs when they present themselves in the foreign labour context. Policies, counselling systems and those dedicated to the education and training should be able to answer to that problem with the concrete methods and the instruments which help to recognize the competences of the single individuals and to interface them with the requirements of the job market.

GC-AC is a project financed from the European programme LLP (Life Long Learning) Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovation. The project addresses key issues on the national level as well as on the European one, in the context of the Lisbon strategy: socio-economic integration of migrant groups, and improvement of women conditions.

GC-AC pursues the following objectives: to improve the quality of VET systems and employment services, to support the development of education, training and active labour market policies by transferring approbated practices and instruments of competence assessment for the integration of weak target group, to improve the employability and adequate labour conditions of final beneficiaries through tailor-made services and policies

The strategic instrument of the project, which is essential for obtaining established objectives, is the Assessmentcenter (AC) successful model, developed in Germany and adapted in order to be transferred and experimented in the partner countries represents

The project partnership involves entities from the different territories, where the Assessment model is supposed to be transferred: Italy (Umbria and Sicily regions), Poland (Varmia-Masuria Voivodeship) and Romania (Hendoara territory).

The adaptation, the transfer and the experimentation of the Assessment Center model become realised in different phases:

preparatory analysis of the territories where the model will be transferred; identification of the operative sector to which the model will be adapted and then experimented; confrontation with the experts from that sector in order to adapt the model to the specific context in which it will be transferred; a training course for

operators about the AC model and its instruments; experimentation of the model realised by the trained operators and finalised with the further adaptation of the AC methods and instruments to the local labour market requirements and to the social conditions of the final beneficiaries.

PARTNERSHIP

The project partnership is composed by the Education&Training Institutions and Entities from the different European Countries:

ITALY

Province of Perugia (Perugia)

which is the project leader responsible for the general coordination and for the financial management of the project. It participates in the methodological adaptation and the experimentation through its own local services for the employment (Job Centers). It coordinates the dissemination and evaluation phases of the project.

Website: <http://www.provincia.perugia.it>

Contact person: Bruno Palazzetti

Iter – Innovazione Terziario (Perugia)

is a training entity of the Confcommercio Umbria and it works in that sector since 1995. It is the leader of the preparatory analysis conducted for the identification of the labour market strategic sectors for the possible integration of the migrant persons, in the partner countries.

It contributes to experimentation and adaptation of the AC methodology and participates in the dissemination of the project and in the evaluation activities.

Website: <http://www.innovazioneterziario.it>

Contact Person: Dante Burzigotti

Share.it (Spoleto)

is the counselling entity for the professional training, employment, equal opportunities and sustainable development. It acts as a local coordinator of the project in Sicily and it contributes to the experimentation and adaptation of the AC methodology through its Training Center in Palermo. It participates in the dissemination and it coordinates the evaluation activities.

Website: <http://www.bbjshare.it>

Contact person: Monika Savier

IF Italia Forma Srl (Piacenza)

works for more than 30 years in the field of support for the education&training systems. In the project it contributes to the adaptation of the method, especially on the on-line platform with the documentation of the competences and on the main materials and final products. It participates in the activities of dissemination and evaluation.

Website: <http://www.italiaforma.it>

Contact person: Leonardo Delfitto

GERMANY

Life e V. (Berlin)

is a non-profit association which works in the field of the lifelong learning and the promotion of the equal opportunities of men and women in the labour market. It is responsible for the transfer and adaptation of the AC methodology, experimented in Germany, in the interested territories. It manages the training sessions of the educators in different fields by sharing and adapting main instruments and materials of the Assessment. It participates in the activity of dissemination and evaluation of the project.

Website: <http://www.life-online.de>

Contact person: Andrea Simon

POLAND

Varmia-Masuria Voivodeship Labour Office in Olsztyn (Olsztyn)

acts as the local coordinator in Poland, participates in the project meeting and conference. It deals with the preparatory analysis of the own context in order to identify the labour market strategic sectors for the possible integration of the migrant persons. It participates in the phases of adaptation, experimentation and transfer of the Assessment methodology through the own local labour departments. It participates in the activities of dissemination.

Website: <http://up.gov.pl>

Contact person: Karina Pankowska

ROMANIA

acts as the local coordinator in Romania, participates in the project meeting and conference. It deals with the preparatory analysis of the own context in order to identify the labour market strategic sectors for the possible integration of the migrant persons. It participates in the phases of adaptation, experimentation and transfer of the Assessment methodology through the own local labour departments. It participates in the activities of dissemination.

Website: <http://www.anofm.ro>

Contact person: Tudorita Bisteanu

ONE YEAR OF THE GC-AC PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Since the beginning of the project in October 2009 many different activities have been realised. The initial phase of the project consisted on the realisation of the territorial context analysis, which indicate training and professional needs of the migrant persons in four territories covered by the project. Those analysis were conducted on the basis of the specific guidelines elaborated for the research development and shared by partners in order to provide the comparative results from every territory and to produce a synthesis which points out the relations between four examined territories. Particular attention were paid on the relations

between the migration flows and on the presence of the enterprises abroad in terms of competences and human capital required.

The research allows to confront three territories: two of them typically “emigrational”: Poland (Varmia-Masuria), Romania (Hunedoara) and one with the strong phenomenon of the immigration observed at least for the last 20/25 years: Italy (Sicily and Umbria).

During the process of the identification of the elements, which highlight the relations between migration flows in the territories covered by the project and their impact on the labour market, especially from the qualitative point of view, a common denominator for different territories was identified. That common denominator comes from the information about the sector which can potentially develop and stimulate new employability of the local and migrant population on those territory, which is tourism. Some professional profiles from that field were identified and the activities necessary for the adaptation, the experimentation and the AC model transfer on the covered territories, supposed to be concentrated on them. Those profiles were defined according to the standards from the Repertorio Regionale dei Profili Professionali della Regione Umbria (Regional List of the Professional Profiles) which are: cook helper, bar attendant, receptionist. Those profiles were preselected on the one hand on the basis of the general aim of all project territories to structure the tourist offer of the high quality in the field of services and on the other hand on the basis of the migrant population profile, especially female, which seem to aspire to medium qualified worker status in the service sector, in particular in tourism.

PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

During the kick-off meeting, which took place in Berlin from 23rd till 26th February 2010 partners from the Life e.V. organisation introduced to other partners a philosophy, methodology and instruments of the Assessmentcenter and underlined the possibilities of its application and its efficiency in the orientation of immigrant workers. Moreover, the special role of E-learning Platform, as a tool which support the transfer of the methodology of the Assessmentcenter, was discussed. Italian partners ITER and Share-it presented the results of their research related to the demands of the Assessmentcenter in the job market especially in Umbria and Sicily. In the end, the guidelines for the future research in Poland and Rumania were presented. The meeting was a perfect occasion to conclude the work plan and divide the tasks related to the following project’s phases.

During the meeting in Perugia Province, which took place in Perugia 12th and 13th of July 2010 partners from Perugia Province, Life e.V., ITER, Share-it, Italia Forma started adaptation of the Assessmentcenter model in the Italian reality. During the first day, the technical issues related to the structure and the content of the E-learning Platform were discussed. The second day of the meeting was dedicated to the analysis of the Assessmentcenter tasks, applied to concrete professional profiles of Cook’s helper, Restaurant and Bar Attendant, Receptionist. In order to enable the creation of such tasks the team of experts

from this field expressed their opinion about the requested transversal competences important for these professional figures and described the typical critical situations which they have to handle. Thanks to the confrontation with the experts from that sector, the Life e.V. and Share-it staff could identify typical transversal competences and professional profiles and was able to design specific exercises for Assessment or the simulations of the real situations which appearing most often in the mentioned work context. Those exercise should make visible the potentiality of the persons in relation to the work they aspire to do. The assessment exercises created in that phase have been the important instruments for the further training of the operators and they will be also used in the phase of the model experimentation with the final beneficiaries.

TRAINING OF THE ASSESMENT CENTER IN PERUGIA (UMBRIA/ ITALY)

From the 27th September till the 1st of October, the first Assessmentcenter training course for the operators took place in Perugia. It was conducted by **Andrea Simon from Life e.V** and we had an occasion to ask her some questions:

Q: What are the main characteristics of the methodology?

A: *The Assessmentcenter is a method for the evaluation of competences, basing on the observation of individual behaviours in the interactions with other persons as well as during the individual performances. Thanks to that process we are able to foreseen if the observed person will be successful or not in the certain role or situation.*

Q:Where does the Assessment Center method come from?

A: *At the beginning Assessmentcenter was only a tool for the selection. For the first time Assessment was used during the First World War for the pilots' selection. That happened because new, complex requests made always more complicated to choose the most appropriate candidates during the traditional interviews. It was necessary to identify a tool, which through the simulation of the critical situation, can enables the verification of the real behaviour of candidates. Since 80s the Assessmentcenter method has been used for the selection of the executive personnel by the most of the important enterprises in Europe and in America. The assessment processes can indicate more precisely the key competences of the candidates and in the "soft skills" sector they give more pointed results that interviews and test usually do. In 90s the Assessmentcenter started to be used as an instrument of education and professional training. A simulation, which recall a real work situation, makes possible for the target person as well as for the educator to recognize in short time strong points and the potential related to the job profile. In Holland in the Job Centers they use the Assessmentcenter in order to integrate with a labour market young unemployed. Also in Germany Training Entities choose always more often that method in order to identify better strong points of the young unemployed during the professional training*



Q:What exactly happens during the Assessment Center?

A: *In the Assessment Center a candidate has to perform a series of the tasks which recreate a critical work situation. The candidate is observed by a group of trained experts on the basis of pre-established criteria. In the center of the observation and the evaluation there are the competences of the person and not her/his deficits. The observation is based on the well defined criteria oriented on the key competences requested for the specific professional profiles e.g communication capacity, orderliness of work, ability to work in group, capacity of problem solving. Then there is a moment of the self-evaluation of own behaviour, always carried out on the basis of the precise observation criteria. In the end the observers communicate to candidate their results and they are confronted with the self-evaluation in order to identify together actions needed for the professional development.*

Q:Why the methodology is adapted for the project target group?

A: *The Assessmentcenter method simulates the requests coming from the work reality. And because of it, participation in the process of the Assessmentcenter always means a strong confrontation with that reality. For migrant women the Assessment has the function of the bridge between different (work) cultures. Participants learn, in the safe conditions, about the important aspects of the work culture in the host country and they try themselves in the situation really close to the real ones. Experiences which they gain in the Assessment help them to evaluate rules and codes of the labour market so they become aware of those norms when they search for a job. Another aspect which can be perceived as an advantage in the work with immigrants is the fact that Assessment is oriented on action. It is not only about speaking but also showing the competences and reflecting on own experience. Also the participants who do not speak perfectly the language of the host country have the possibility in that way to show own competences and to try themselves.*

During the Assessment Center workshop, for 5 days educators from the training entities and operators from the Job Centers were trained. The training is composed from two parts: a theoretical one which illustrates a history and tools of the methodology and practical one when the operators took part in the exercises and tasks. The chosen exercises and tasks are finalized with the observation and documentation of the transversal competences identified as essential for the professions which are objects of the experimentation. Five days dedicated to the training of the Assessmentcenter were evaluated in a very positive way by the participants. In order to recall the personal evaluation and reflections of the participants we interviewed one of the participants **Dott. Francesco Giovagnoni from the Job Center in Perugia.**

Q: In the light of your many years' experience in the field of human resources and training which kind of evaluation of the training course could you give us? What does exactly mean for you to participate and experiment during the training course of the Assessmentcenter?

A: *It was a very special occasion which let us confront with a methodology already experimented in Germany on thousands of users. What is more, even if I have many years' experience in the field of professional training, the training course reminds me how important and in the same dime difficult it is to be free of prejudices, schemes in the confrontation with an interlocutor. The AC methodology helps operator to divide the area of the objective observation from the area of the evaluation. I have also identified the analogies between the method AC and the one that we use in the Job Centers which are mainly related to the fact that both methods put in the center of attention a person who has to be brought under the conditions which help him/her to recall their professional path and which let the operators give him/her support in defining a future professional project.*



Q: So, you have highlighted the convergence points. Could you also speak about the main differences between those methodological systems?

A: I would not speak about the differences but about the applicability of the AC in the context of the services provided by the Job Centers. It is about the identification of the way to transfer and to adapt of the know-how given to us by Life e.V. in the context of reduced financial resources of the public job services. The AC is the methodology which entails the implementation of several procedures which have their costs. For example there is a need of involvement of the groups composed from 8 to 15 persons for 4 or 5 days. So the certain problems could be identified in the experimentation and complete transposition of the methodology in the Job Centers. From this point of view, during the last day of the training course we discussed with Andrea Simon how to adapt that instrument to the conditions of the local Job Centers. For example it can be desirable to experiment the AC on the smaller group, homogeneous from the point of view of experience and professional goals, and to reduce the duration of the experimentation to one or two days. We have promised to ourselves to discuss it again during the meeting which will be organized at the begging of the next year, before the AC experimentation, in the Job Center of Perugia. The reduction of the experimentation duration means a lot for the internal organizational issues of the Job Center. To sum up, the difference between two methodologies consist of the feedback's presence which is typical for the analytical-experimented method of the AC and which is not foreseen by the ordinary procedures implemented by the Job Center operators.

Q: Before you have mentioned the importance of the objective observation, so the one free from prejudices and interpretational categories. Could you present me the methodology from the point of view of the one of it tools - registration

A: According to me the architrave of the methodology is the facts that it is based on the operator's experience. Andrea Simon has underlined that the observation time can be reduced in relation to the operators' experience. In the Assessmentcenter the observation of the individuals is related to the certain parameters so the observer has to pay attention on those parameters which are the competences and the items – components of each competence. So this is clear that the observation of more competences on the same group of individuals and the identification of the items is the most difficult thing. The feedback about what was observed given through the analysis and comments is the consequence: from the good observation comes good, commented feedback. Registration and observation are two fundamental processes during which the experience counts. The experimentation of the AC which will take place next year, with the support and supervision of Life e.V. experts who will observe the observers, will be the next decisive step for the proper acquisition of the methodology.

Q: You have told us about the importance of the giving feedback procedure from the point of view of the observer and then about another fundamental instruments for the observed individuals – self-evaluation. Do those two phases intersect? And how?

A: Of course, because the auto-evaluation of the observed individual has to be realised on the basis of the established parameters, there is no space for the free interpretation, but on the contrary, it is all about the clear and defined methodology frameworks. It is a moment when the observed person becomes aware of the own actions and performances and obviously it is a phase when the observer get more ideas which will be then given back with the feedback. During the training phase we noticed that the observed person tends to point up own limits as regards certain competences and to highlight that according to him/her the task was performed worse than it could be done with the own declared potential. On the other hand the observers didn't see, in such a negative way, the same performance. What is more they tended to underline the positive aspects of it. Those two phases are strongly interconnected, the self-evaluation is an instrument which reinforce the operator's observation. Sometimes it can be dissonant but as Andrea Simon said it happens rarely and in most of the cases it is about the confirmation.

Q: How do you think to experiment the AC method in the context of Job Centres in the Province of Perugia?

A: Firstly, I think that the voluntariness of the access to a tool like this is fundamental for the a good result of the procedure itself. The access must be preceded by a detailed explanation so that the users (observed and observers) can agree completely on it and become convinced to take part in AC, otherwise they will only waste their time. Candidates must be found on that basis. Together with our partner Iter and the Università dei Saporì, we will evaluate the possibility of setting up a group which satisfy all criteria for the attainment of the proper testing of the method. Life e.V. tried out the AC method at the time of the German reunification after the fall of the Berlin Wall, on a target constituted by women coming from the East and with a high level of education. We plan to try out the method on a different target: on immigrant women interested in professions like cook helper, bar attendant, receptionist. On that base, we will have to set up a group that consciously and voluntarily adhere to the training course and to the AC method.

Q: We have talked about the added value of the method above all from the operator and educator's point of view: highlighted analytical factors and objectivity of observation. From the point of view of the foreigner woman who is searching for a job or for the improvement of the proper professional situation what can be defined as the added value in comparison with the methodology normally used in the Job Centers in the Province of Perugia?

A: During the ten years of their existence Job Centres have accumulated an important experience. Everyday many foreigner citizens use the services offer by the Job Centers and we speak mainly about the persons without high education level and who are urgently searching for a job in order to survive. Having under consideration that picture of the situation, we should implement the AC methodology with that part of the foreigner citizens who want to get out of the job situation which is not related to their professional profile, who express proper will to get out of the situation of the underemployment, in the pragmatic way, by investing in themselves. According to my experience gained during the 10 years of

the job counseling, those requirements are fundamental. Last case that I can recall is an Albanian girl which came to Italy, started to work as a carer and then she finished University and became a lawyer and now she is working in the import-export enterprise. With that kind of individuals we can test the method. There is a need to structure the AC path for the concrete target, in order to identify the foreigners who really can take benefit from that kind of instrument. I would like to add that in prospect that AC method could become particularly efficient also for the Italian users, I mean recent graduated because it could help them to rationalize and focus themselves on the transversal competences that they have to acquired in order to become profitable on the labour market. Finally I see in a very positive way the possibility of the integration of that methodology to the services offered by our Job Centers. AC cannot replace other instruments and procedures but hopefully it can be integrated with them.



Provincia di Perugia
Italia



Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy w Olsztynie
Polska



Life e.V.
Deutschland



Iter
Italia



Agentia Nationala pentru Ocuparea
Forței de Munca
România



Share-it
Italia



If Italia Forma
Italia



Fondazione ECAP
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.