



Transparency and Self-employment
for migrant workers through
Assessment Center

GIVECOMPETENCEACHANCE



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



NEWSLETTER N.2



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Project:

GC-AC Give Competence A Chance

Transparency and Self-employment for migrant workers through
Assessment Center

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The period of the training and experimentation in Italy foreseen for the project *GC-AC, Give Competence a Chance Transparency and Self-employment for migrant workers through Assessmentcenter* is almost completed. The project activities have involved different professional figures working in the field of the job counselling in the Western Sicily and the Province of Perugia (Umbria) and immigrant women, final beneficiaries of the methodology which is used to evaluate and bring to the light the competences of the single individuals and also to interface them according to the labour market's requirements.

Now, thanks to the stories, reflections and different points of view of the project's protagonists, we will recall main phases, meaning and importance of that demanding path. We will mainly concentrate ourselves on the experimentation phase. In the first number of the Newsletter we wrote about the former phase, that was the training path attended only to the operators.

The training and the experimentation of the Assessmentcenter in Sicily.

A week of the practical experimentation of the Assessmentcenter took place between 7th and 11th of February 2011 in Marsala, in the office of the Sportello Multifunzionale ANFE. The experimentation phase was preceded by the week of the training (13th-17th of December 2010) in which 15 operators from the Sportelli Multinazionali ANFE in the Western Sicily, took part.

During the training lessons led by Andrea Simon and attended by the operators, the Assessmentcenter methodology was described as the one which helps to identify key competences of the users who are at a disadvantage. Andrea Simon illustrated the directions for use and the worthiness of the application which consists on the creation of the simulated situations (exercises, preparations) characteristic for

the most critical and common moments of the professional daily life of the candidates.

The operators (tutors, trainers, counsellors, psychologists) have successfully learned the techniques, essential for the reconstruction of the Assessmentcenter session with the real target. Three new exercises were tested: “Play card” , “Supermenu”, “In the jungle of bureaucracy”. In those exercises everyone could try off different roles: moderator, observed person and observer. The professional profile, the technical competences of the operators as well as a significant experience of the trainer-expert from the Life e.V. have helped in the process of assimilation of the micro-observation techniques, essential for the assessment of the users.

We have interviewed **Gloria Neerman**, the coordinator of the whole experimentation process in Sicily.

Q:How many immigrant women have participated in the experimentation? Which is their typology?

A:15 migrant women were selected, 8 of them seemed to guarantee in the more efficient way the application of the experimentation not only because of their knowledge of the Italian language but also because of their motivation. The average age of these women is about 28/32 years old, all of them work in the field of the health services as home health care, they come from Tunisia, India, Romania, and Nigeria, almost all of them have families and three of them have small children, two of those children were involved in the experimentation, because there were not any family member available for taking care of them.

Q:Do you want to say that two children were present during the days of experimentation? Did it cause any problems?

A:The presence of two small children (two years and four months) doesn't seem to have the particular impact on the progress of the Assessment implementation, because during the key moment of the experimentation it was possible to take care of them in the adjoining rooms thanks to the other people working in that training center. There was a special atmosphere thanks to the relaxed participation in the groups: both of the

operators and of the migrant women. Well, we can say that the Assessment methodology is easy to be conciliated with mothers' needs.

Q:Let's come back to the main issue. How did the week of the experimentation go over?

*A:On the first day, the one of the preparation of the Assessment, eleven operators participated. Eight persons had been selected from that group and then they observed and took part in the exercises with the immigrant women during the following days. The prepared exercises: "Play card", "Supermenu", "In the jungle of bureaucracy" were readjusted according to the real situations with which immigrants have to cope in everyday life and which are well-known to the operators. In the end of the experimentation individual and group discussions took place in order to point out the level of satisfaction and the effectiveness of the experience, especially from the point of view of the expert Andrea Simon. During the last morning Andrea Simon could present in details and describe the contents of the platform which supports the project. The operators with some of the users could use the platform thanks to the temporary password, created by the project partner **Italia forma** for this occasion. In the following months, during the individual meetings, the operators will have a possibility to experiment and use the platform, together with all the users who will express a request.*

Between March 22nd and March 25th, 2011, in Perugia, in the office of the project partner ITER -Innovazione Terziario s.c.a.r.l took place the meeting dedicated to the experimentation of the Assessmentcenter methodology for the women with the immigrant background

The experimentation of the Assessmentcenter in Umbria and the retrospective look on the former training course.

Remarks of some of the operators let us retrace the important training course in which they took part in Perugia. The course was composed from the training workshop on the

Assessment methodology which took place from September 27th till October 1st 2010 and from the experimentation of the method carried out in March 2011.

Silvia Degli Esposti, Training expert from ITER - Innovazione Terziario s.c.a.r.l.:

“The experimentation activity was a very useful completion of training which took place in September. It became immediately evident that the former training activity was efficient, because even after the break of several months, I didn’t have any difficulties to recall learned methodology and concepts and to use them in the direct application. The experimentation, through the concrete application of the concepts and methodologies, let me gain greater consciousness of the main aim and the specific goals which Assessment tends to reach. Going through all of the phases, from the simulation during the training to the application of the methodology to the persons with the concrete background and expectations, made me understand the important and delicate role of the trainer and also how important it is to keep observations in the sphere of objectivity. Particularly involving was conducting the individual discussions: it is not easy at all to give back to someone a result of the observation or to draft the report without drawing own conclusions. Also in that phase, the language has to be “calibrated” in order to be put in use for the questions and observations of the interlocutor. The experimentation realised among the beneficiaries was extremely useful for underlining of the typical problems of the immigrants who confront themselves with the job pursuit. Several requirements were expressed: to learn how to write the cv, to learn how to speak with the bureaucracy and to collect information needed for all the activities which involve the dialogue with the offices’ workers. Many problems important for the immigrants were signaled and the need to stop and look at them were raised more than I had expected. It was really interesting to see how the training course of Assessment had contributed to modify the attitude of some of the beneficiaries into positive one. They were initially sceptic (it was related to their difficulties with finding a job) but then their confidence were inspired, probably thanks to their deeper awareness of own skills”.

Michela Serafini, operator from the Job Center (Centro per l'Impiego) of Provincia di Perugia:

“The training seminar on the Assessmentcenter was really interesting because for the first time I had the occasion to observe and evaluate the competences of the candidates during the simulations. The seminar which took place in September 2010 was for sure very useful to this end. We were personally involved in turn, in the simulations while our colleagues were observing and assessing us. A good work team was created thanks to the good organisation of the seminar and to the preparation and the capacity for involvement from the part of Andrea Simon, the responsible for the methodology. I believe it will be interesting to combine this methodology with those used already for the personnel selection, for example, or for the assessment of the cross cutting competences”.

While talking with some of the beneficiaries of the experimentation in Perugia, we were trying to understand if and in which way this course were useful for their careers guidance and own personal growth.

Maria Jose Gonzales Auquilla, 21 years old, originally comes from Ecuador, has been living in Italy for 9 years and is a student of Economy and Legislation of the Enterprise at Perugia University. For Maria, the experimentation of the *Assessmentcenter* has represented the confirmation of the own potentialities and the instrument which is able to give her an advantage on the ever-evaluating labour market:

“I had a chance to prove what I have already known...I like speaking with people, interacting with them. From this point of view, team activities performed during the experimentation by the persons of different age groups, who didn't know each other, coming from the different cultures, gave to me an important testing ground for my capacity to work in synergistic manner. Ability to work in group is one of the prior quality from the companies' point of view and because of that, it is necessary to obtain excellent communication and relational skills. Recently I have taken part in the seminar organised by the Faculty of Economics, in which big companies have

participated and all of them have underlined the importance of the Assessment, because in many Italian companies that methodology is common tool during the personnel selection in order to verify the capacities need for holding certain positions. My colleagues had difficulties to understand this approach and I, with the advantage taken from the completed Assessment experimentation, could explained them the methodology thanks to my experience.”

Speaking about the personal growth, Maria believes that she has improved her self-esteem thanks to the Assessment:

“Especially in the academic context I find myself in difficulties because my social situation is different from the Italian colleagues’ one. I have completed less exams because these years I have been not only studying but also working as a waitress and hostess. I have done different kind of jobs which have in common direct contact with the public. I have been always thinking, and now I am pretty sure that I haven’t lost my time while gaining that work experience. I have developed relational competences, indispensable in the labour market of today. The academic path being individual, doesn’t offer for sure the training ground for development of the listening and relational capacities and maybe because of it, it is difficult to put the knowledge gained from the books into practice”.

Maria Iftode, 21 years old, comes from Romania, where she obtained her diploma. She has been living in Italy for three years and she has worked as a kitchen assistant and as the care giver for elderly. Maria was expecting that the days dedicated to the *Assessmentcenter* will consist on the typical lessons during which the teacher will simple list the characteristic of the method and give the sciolistic type of contents. She was then surprised and satisfied when she had discover that the training course will be completely different from the imagined one:

“I had a really great time, I have learned new things, living the new experience. I have never worked in team before, never self-managed my work and I have never had the occasion to express my opinions, to listen to those of my colleagues and therefore to mediate different points of view. Thanks to the realisation of the prepared exercises I

could confirm the competences which I evidently have, but which I couldn't experiment in my previous working places. I feel more self-confident and more convinced about my competences: communication capacity, enthusiasm, capacity to organise work on my own and a capacity to make relations with others even when the difficulties occur. In the future I would like to work as an educator in the kindergarten and now I have become convinced about my aspiration thanks to my competences which Assessmentcenter method has highlighted.”



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