

New Approaches to Vocational Training for Young Migrants

- Brief Description -

The “New Approaches to Vocational Training for Young Migrants” pilot project results from a co-operation between the Wiesbaden Detention Centre (DC) and INBAS (Institute for Vocational Education, Labour Market and Social Politics, www.inbas.com), based in Offenbach am Main. The project is supported within the “*Promoting Competencies – Vocational Qualification for Target Groups with Special Needs*”, or *BQF*, programme. The BQF programme, which is supported by the European Social Fund, was kicked-off in 2001 by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and seeks to promote initiatives which advance support programmes for the disadvantaged and improve the educational and vocational training situation of migrants (www.kompetenzen-foerdern.de). The Initiative Office for the Vocational Qualification of Migrants (www.bibb.de/ibqm) is tasked with providing scientific support for this as well as for other BQF projects.

The project is implemented at Wiesbaden DC where project activities need to be organised taking into account both the general conditions within the institution and the legal security requirements. At the same time, however, the German Prison Act grants sufficient leeway to realise the project objectives.

The pilot project was designed against the backdrop of the average period of detention of most inmates having been twelve months over the last few years. Thus, (1) a fully-fledged vocational training or a training course up to the intermediate examination (in line with Article 42 of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG)) is not possible during the detention period and (2) it would be asking too much from many inmates to confront them with a vocational education programme due to various personal reasons. Additionally, (3) the DC wants to include elements of support-plan-based work into the inmates’ personal development plans (Article 7 of the Prison Act) – however, the DC was not aware of the young persons’ capabilities since the overwhelming shortcomings cast a shadow over actually existing competencies.

The DC is designed to house 300 male inmates between 19 and 25 years of age (punitive detention, detention awaiting trial, custody pending deportation after refusal of asylum). The project is geared to punitive detention inmates, some 55 to 60 per cent of whom have a migration background, the largest group among them being ethnic Germans immigrated from Russia, followed by Turks and North Africans. The project’s immediate **target group** are German resettlers from Russia, Turks and North Africans. At the end of the day, however, all punitive detainees are to benefit from the results of the project.

The inmates suffer from social marginalisation, which has several reasons – they did not complete school, dropped out of their vocational training course or lack a structured lifestyle. Roles which might contribute to a certain order and a stabilisation of expectations are only rudimentarily developed. The share of drug-addicted inmates has recently exceeded 40 per cent. Even prior to detention, they had considerable difficulties entering the labour market, and their situation is set to become even more difficult if no countermeasures are taken.

Given the multitude of problems, the project is not limited to strictly confined areas of action, but tries to cover all stages from arriving at the DC (admission department), to vocational qualification during so-called socially-therapeutic detention and release planning. The innovative character of the project lies in the introduction of a diagnosis, qualification and re-integration programme which is adapted to the DC environment and which considers the specific needs of young migrants without falling back on stereotyping related to their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

The most critical **objective** of the pilot project is to support the re-integration into the labour market of juvenile punitive detainees with and without a migration background. Thus, a relapse into criminal behaviour is to be prevented. From this principal project objective, **three sub-objectives** may be derived:

- The capabilities and support needs of migrant (and other) inmates are to be identified by means of a suitable diagnosis procedure (first field of work).
- A differentiated initial and further training programme, which is based on current vocational education and labour market demands, is to be set up (and has already been set up). The “New School” concept seeks to further strengthen the educational and vocational training profile of the DC (second field of work).
- Release planning is to be tackled by a (supra-)regional network of labour market and education players to support former inmates after discharge from custody when they enter the labour market or take up vocational training (third field of work).

In these three fields of work, the project has **completed the following steps**:

- Introduction of a competence assessment procedure (manual skills/motoric aptitude test, www.hamet2.de), which is compatible to downstream qualification measures, and of monitoring forms which cover both general behavioural development and the development of skills during detention (admission department and during detention awaiting trial). Documentation and reporting of diagnosis and monitoring results. Creation of support plans. Narrative interviews with young migrants which focus on migrant-specific education and vocational training careers.
- Modularisation of vocational preparation qualification programmes using national qualification modules, which are used in the state of Hesse’s “partial qualification model”.
- Didactic further development of school-based education offers (career orientation courses for migrants, preparation of external general secondary school examinations, German as a second language, specific support courses).
Since 2004, the adaptation of the qualification programmes to the short detention periods has led to three passed exams after complete vocational training courses, 63 persons have sat their intermediate examinations and 102 people have participated in partial qualification schemes whereas 172 exams have been sat after the completion of a qualification module.
- Establishment of transition management and networking activities. Co-operation with labour market players, education providers and other DCs in finding a job or a vocational training place for former inmates and in establishing a mentoring model to support people released from custody.

On the organisational level and as regards the introduction “strategy” for the new elements, the pilot project relies on the organisation development processes which result from the New Administration Management scheme. On the operating level, elements of empowerment, individual support plans and continuous co-ordination with DC employees are at the top of the agenda.

In 2005 and 2006, the project will focus on transition management, PR work (including a documentary film) and transfer issues.

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