

## Good practices in vocational guidance:

### CONTACT POINTS FOR PEOPLE WHO GAINED PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS ABROAD (AST)



#### WHAT?

Counselling on recognition and further educational topics for migrants, people entitled to asylum status and to subsidiary protection. Multilingual consultations are offered in the following languages: German, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Turkish, English, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, French, Romanian, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Farsi, Arabic, Dioula, and Bobo.

#### WHO?

AST: Anlaufstellen für Personen mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen.

#### IMPACT OF THE PRACTICE?

Annual counselling numbers have increased since 2013 - from 4,599 migrants in the first year to 8,204 in 2019. In 2020, fewer people were counselled on-site (6,263) due to COVID-19; at the same time, there was a significant increase in the number of telephone and virtual counselling contacts (21,844 in total) in addition to face-to-face counselling contacts. The contact points (represented by the Vienna Counselling Centre for Migrants) were selected as the best European project on the validation of brought-in competences and were awarded the VINCE Validation Prize 2019.

#### TARGET GROUP?

Migrants and refugees.

- Not connected to the formal education and training system.
- Upper secondary VET (academic and apprenticeship based).
- VET (school-based and apprenticeship based).

#### ELEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE:

- Impact local level ✓
- Impact national level ✓
- Impact EU level ✓
- Transferability ✓
- Quality assurance ✓
- Innovative practice ✓

#### WHERE?

Austria

## ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENTING THE PRACTICE

Contact name: Milica Tomić-Schwingenschlögl, Coordination of regional AST offices.

AST is sponsored by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection. Some of the employees are supported by the municipality. Currently, 26 counsellors are employed. In 2018, EUR 1,906,300 were dedicated to all AST Contact Points in Austria.

## METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Some qualified migrants spend years being trapped in low skilled jobs despite having foreign qualifications. The reasons are diverse: lack of support in their job search, family reasons, being a single wage earner or complex processes of qualifications recognition. The contact-points help migrants to improve their labour market situation by providing information, further education and training, counselling and clarification of professional goals.

AST Contact Points have been established to inform migrants and refugees about recognition of their qualifications, the ways the qualifications are used, and potential improvements of their (labour market) integration. The BZ (Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen, Counselling Centre for Migrants) is a holding organization for regional AST-centres, and it coordinates the activities and tasks of contact-points (AST). Contact-points (AST) are acting as advice service under the framework of the Recognition and Assessment Act.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The external evaluation of AST shows that participation in the counselling speeds up the recognition and/or assessment of foreign qualifications, helps with re-qualification and further training/education, supports finding employment suited to migrants' qualifications, and helps avoid underqualified employment.

## RELEVANCE FOR VET VOICES

Activities of recognition counselling:

- Forwarding of diplomas to validation offices.
- If necessary, request of certified translations of diplomas, certificates and other documents. The cost to certify translations of documents is covered as well.
- Clarification of necessity and possibility of formal recognition.
- Assistance during recognition proceedings.
- Providing information on German language courses and „bridging courses“ and how to find financing for these courses.

Ongoing collaboration and networking with the public employment services, employment promotion fund or integration fund for support on further education trainings, social partners, education providers, recognition authorities, the Ministry of Science and federal governments.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/contact-points-people-who-gained-professional-qualifications-abroad-ast>

<https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/contact-points-persons-who-gained-professional-qualifications-abroad>