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”Adaptation and enhancement of the European supported employment model to enable accessible labour market pathway for refugees and immigrants”

Pilot-Implementation National Report

Portugal

An ERASMUS+ small-scale partnership project in the vocational education and training
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1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the ADAPTREF project encompass several key aspects: to adapt and enhance the European Supported Employment model, to develop career counselling guidelines supporting labour market inclusion, to train career counsellors and supported employment consultants according to these guidelines, and to expand qualification opportunities for VET providers and trainers.

The training provided by the ADAPTREF project focuses on the European Supported Employment model, customised to facilitate the labour market inclusion of refugees and immigrants, particularly those originating from Ukraine. The ultimate aim is to prepare professionals to offer tailored support, equipping refugees and immigrants with the skills and resources for seamless integration into the labour market.

In concrete, activity 3 of the ADAPTREF project centres on pilot implementation training for career counsellors and supported employment consultants. The principal objective is to train a minimum of 10 professionals in each partner country, adhering to the new guidelines for the Supported Employment (SE) method. Additionally, this activity seeks to bolster qualification opportunities for Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and trainers by furnishing methodological guidelines for training career counsellors and supported employment consultants.

The pilot implementation training sessions were conducted in each partner country, specifically targeting career counsellors and supported employment consultants. These sessions were structured in alignment with the newly developed SE method guidelines. The curriculum encompassed diverse aspects of SE, such as assessment techniques, job matching strategies, employer engagement, job rotation, and ongoing support for individuals with varied backgrounds, with a particular focus on refugees and immigrants from Ukraine. The overarching objective of the piloting phase is to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the ADAPTREF training across participating countries.

The primary aim of this pilot report is to furnish pertinent insights into the implementation of the pilot process in Portugal. This contribution is intended to optimise project outcomes, specifically enhancing the ADAPTREF training content and materials based on pilot findings. It is noteworthy that the pilot plan, developed collaboratively by the project coordinator and Consultis, facilitated iterative testing and national piloting between November 2023 and January 2024. Participants were actively engaged throughout this period, enabling comprehensive testing, assessment, and refinement of the training content and materials.



2. PILOTERS

The target group was constituted by career counsellors and supported employment consultants.

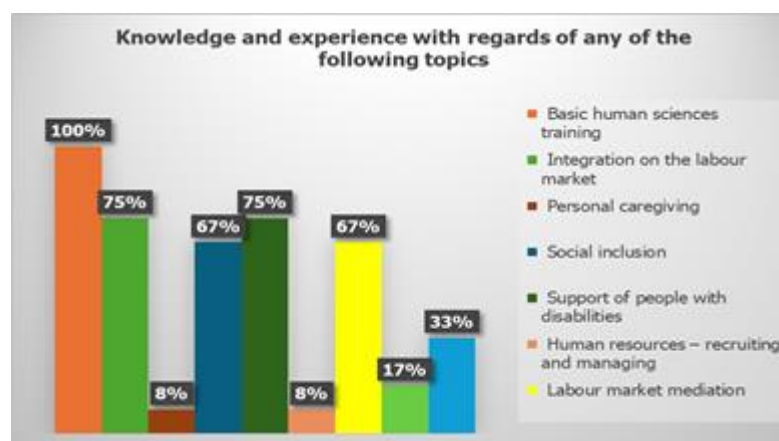
Before piloting took place, a few preparatory steps were followed:

- Identification of trainers and participants.
- Engagement of the participants into piloting.

Considering the number of interested candidates, 12 participants working in social inclusion of different groups were engaged, most of them psychologists and social workers. Their background was the following:



The experience of the participants encompassed the following topics:





3. STAGES OF PILOTING

3.1. TIME SCHEDULE

The different piloting stages took place in the period from November 2023 to January 2024. 5 training sessions, 4 hours each, supported by online mentoring sessions whenever necessary. During the pilot period and beyond, Consultis team provided continuous support and expert advice to all participants. Our proactive engagement involved sharing key insights and facilitating the practical application of the methodologies and techniques within their daily professional practices.

3.2. MATERIALS

For the training sessions, the following materials were made available:

Course material

- ADAPTREF results (R1: Enhanced and adapted version of the European supported employment model specifically related to the counseling and guidance of refugees and immigrants and R2: Career counseling guidelines for career counsellors and supported employment consultants to support the realisation of the process of their labour market inclusion) and ppts that highlight major topics either printed or electronically.

Supporting hardware

- Whiteboard and markers
- Laptop
- Beamer

3.3. METHODOLOGY

A total of 12 participants enrolled in the pilot training programme. Prior to the training sessions, the 12 participants briefly familiarized themselves with the curriculum's content and structure using the two guides produced by ADAPTREF. 4 trainers/facilitators were engaged in conducting the training sessions.

Upon completion of the training sessions and the subsequent case-based assessment (with examples detailed in annex I), all participants satisfactorily met the program requirements. A participation certificate was issued for all the participants.



To gather feedback from the participants, a post-piloting satisfaction survey was distributed. The survey consisted of three parts:

I. Reasons for Participation: Participants were asked to provide insights into their motivations for joining the training, aiming to understand the factors driving their interest and engagement.

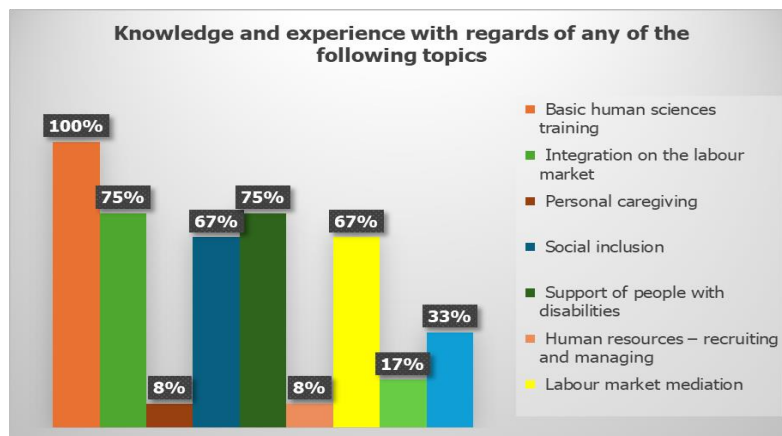
II. Aims and Thematic Scope: Participants were invited to share their perspectives on the training's objectives and thematic scope, assessing the alignment with their perceived needs.

III. Training Organization and Environment: This section focused on evaluating the organization and environment of the training sessions, including feedback on logistics, facilitation quality, and the overall learning environment.

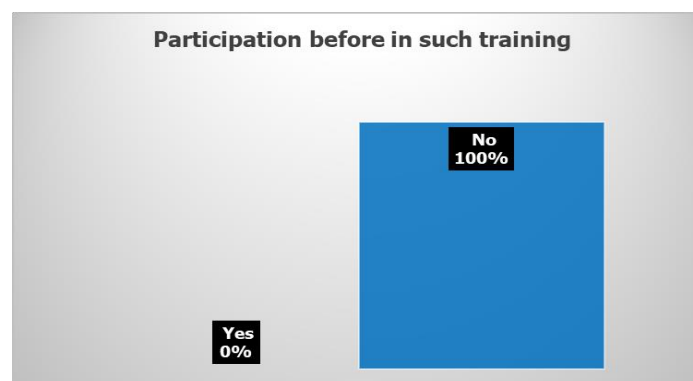
4. FINDINGS

PART I – THE REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE TRAINING

Do you have any knowledge and experience with regards of any of the following topics?

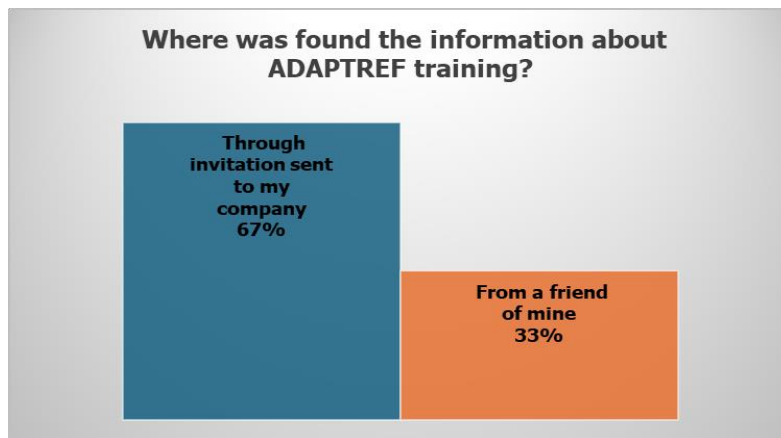


Have you participated before in such training?

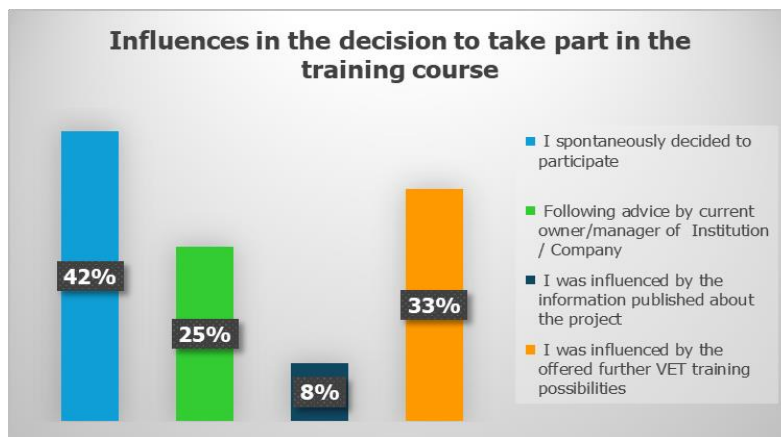




Where did you find the information about ADAPTREF training?



What influenced your decision to take part in the training course?



In your opinion, can you consider your participation in this training as an advantage or potential advantage to your work?





Do you think that your participation in the training will contribute to your career development?

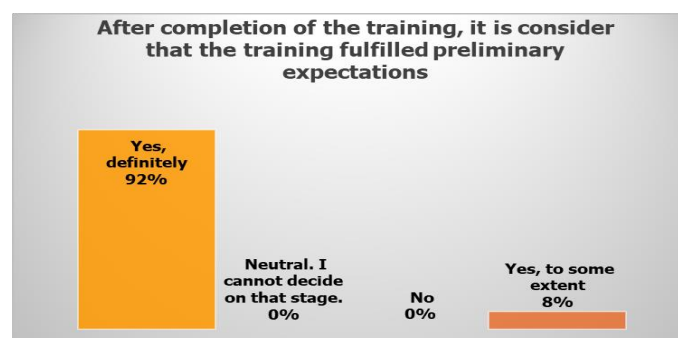


What was your motivation to participate in the training? (You can select more than one answer)



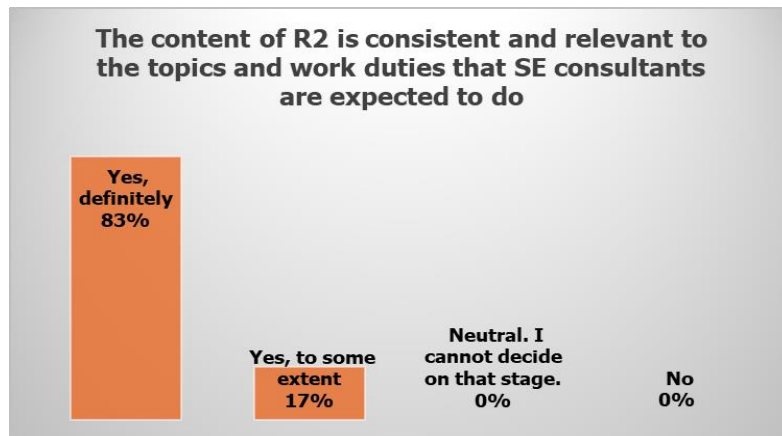
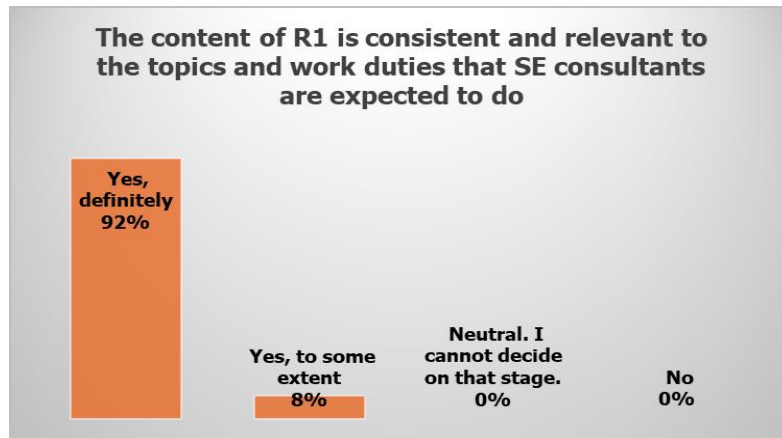
PART II - AIMS AND THEMATIC SCOPE OF THE TRAINING

In your opinion, after completion of the training, can you consider that the training fulfilled your preliminary expectations?

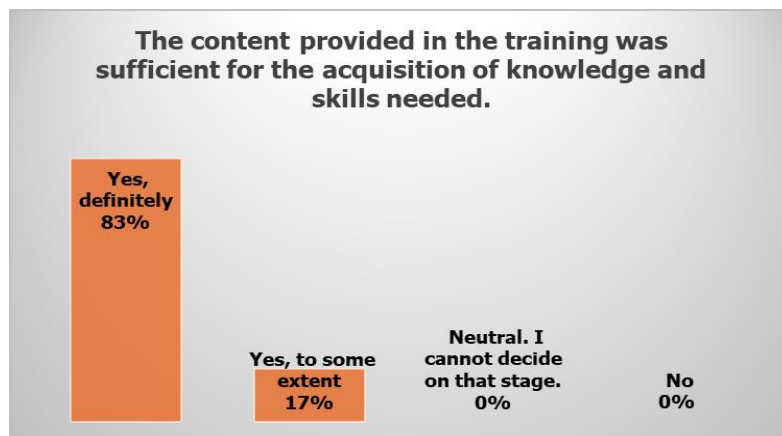




In your opinion, to what extent was the content of the training deliverables consistent and relevant to the topics and work duties that SE consultants are expected to do? Please select the most appropriate one for each module.

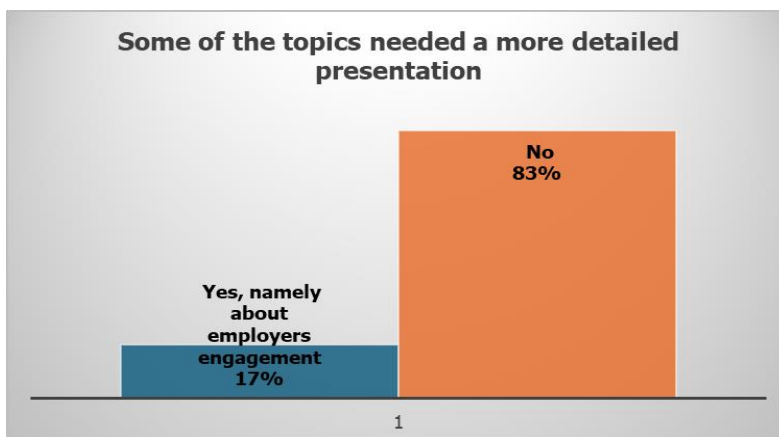


Was the content provided in the training sufficient for the acquisition of knowledge and skills you need?

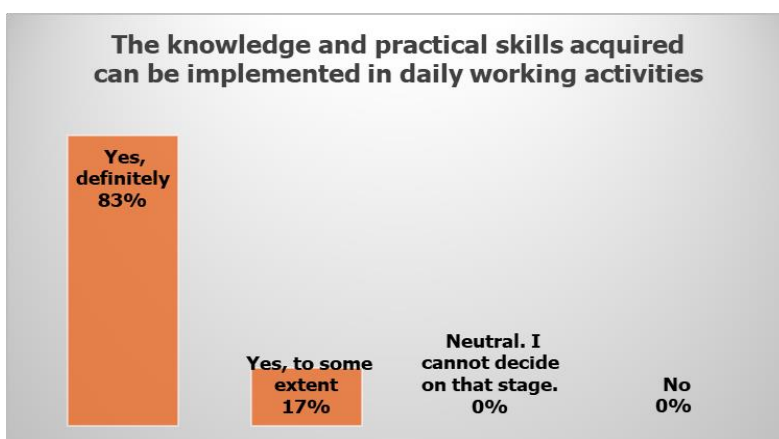




Do you think that some of the topics need more detailed presentation?

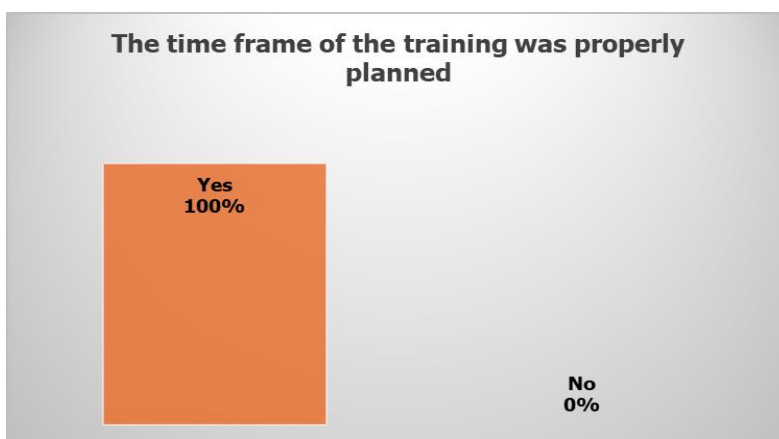


Do you think that the knowledge and practical skills acquired during the training can be implemented in your daily working activities?



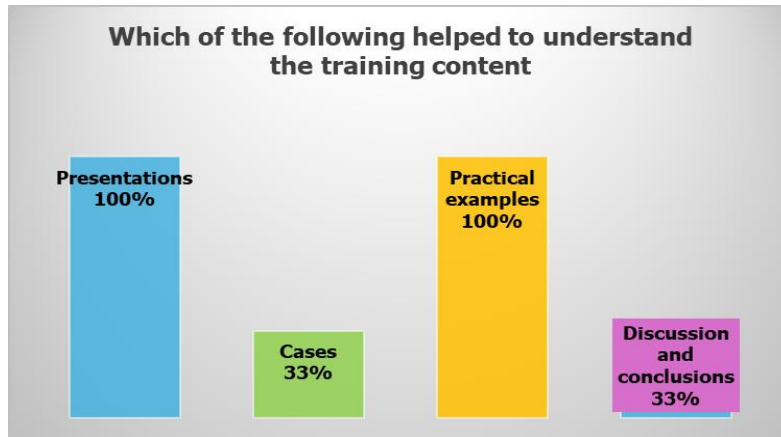
PART III - TRAINING ORGANISATION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

In your opinion, was the time frame of the training properly planned?

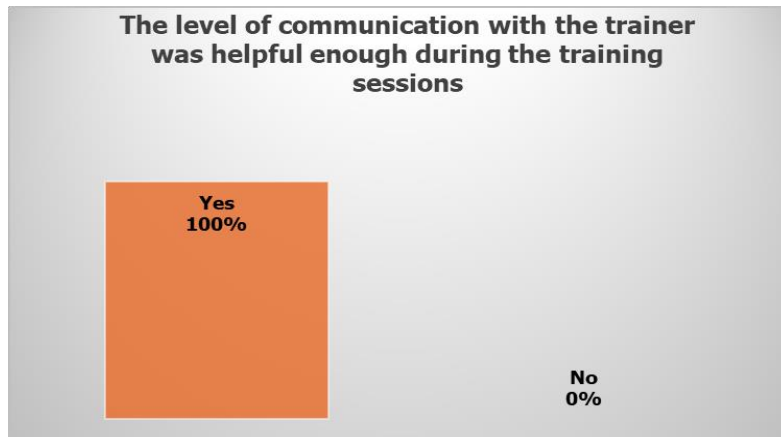




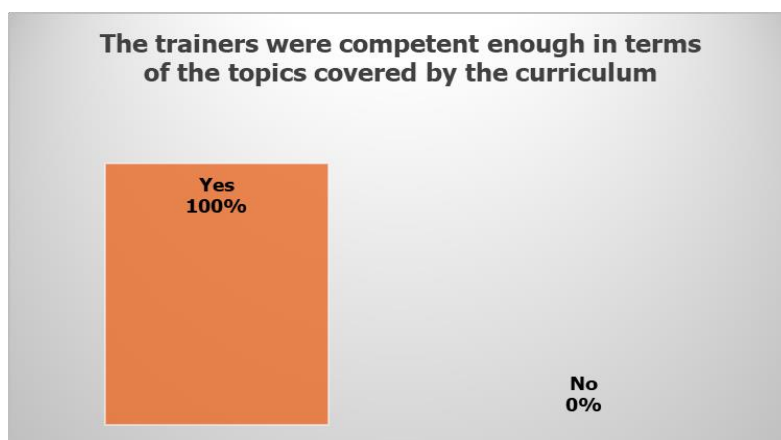
In your opinion, which of the following helped you to understand the training content?



In your opinion, was the level of communication with the trainer helpful enough during the training sessions?



Do you think that the trainers are competent enough in terms of the topics covered by the curriculum?





What did you like the most in ADAPTREF training?

- The subject of the training
- The possibility of acquiring new knowledge about the inclusion of migrants and refugees
- Practical activities and practical tools
- Acquiring and deepening knowledge about migrants/refugees' labour market inclusion.
- The innovation of the topics
- The materials presented

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. OVERALL PERCEPTION

The overall perception of the 12 participants in the training sessions was very positive. All participants felt that the training was beneficial to their professional activities and would contribute to their career development. In fact, all participants considered that the knowledge and practical skills acquired during the training will be implemented in their daily work. Regarding the expectations of the participants, all responses were positive, 92% considered that the training met their preliminary expectations and 8% considered that it met their expectations to some extent.

Regarding the two ADAPTREF outcomes, all participants agreed that their content was consistent, relevant, and sufficient to the issues and work developed by supported employment advisors. In terms of topics that needed to be covered in more detail, 17% of participants identified employer engagement as a topic that needed to be covered in more detail, so we have provided additional resources on this topic and revised the final version of R1.

The overall perception of the training organisation and environment was also very positive, especially in terms of the time frame, the level of communication with the trainers and the competence of the trainers. During the training sessions, participants felt that the presentations, cases, practical examples, and discussions in the training room helped them to understand the training content.

5.2. OVERALL SUGGESTIONS

In the feedback received, two participants highlighted the need for additional focus on employer engagement within the training program. They suggested incorporating more case studies and practical activities on this topic. This suggestion is understandable considering that many participants are professionals whose work revolves around inclusion in the labour market. They are acutely aware of the challenges, particularly regarding employer involvement and commitment. Addressing these difficulties directly can enhance the effectiveness of the training and better prepare participants to navigate real-world scenarios. We have provided additional resources on this topic and revised the final version of R1.



6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the positive responses from the 12 professionals who participated in the piloting of the ADAPTREF training, several conclusions emerge:

All participants had relevant qualifications or training in career guidance, social work, or related fields. Despite differences in knowledge and experience, they shared a strong interest in advancing their expertise in supported employment (SE) and labour market inclusion, highlighting the potential for collaboration and growth within the program.

Participants felt that the training met their preliminary expectations and provided relevant content consistent with the duties expected of SE consultants. They particularly valued the career counselling guidelines within the adapted European SE model.

Participants commended the thoughtfully planned time frame of the training, acknowledging its efficacy in accommodating their learning needs. They valued the diverse components, including presentations, case studies, practical examples, and discussions, which collectively facilitated their comprehensive understanding and absorption of the training content.

Overall, participants appreciated the comprehensive nature of the training and believed that the knowledge and skills acquired could be applied effectively in their daily work activities.

In conclusion, the piloting of the ADAPTREF training proved successful, as participants expressed satisfaction with the content, organization, and delivery. Their positive feedback underscores the program's effectiveness in enhancing the skills and competencies of professionals in supporting labour market inclusion for refugees and immigrants. Furthermore, the results of the case-based assessment indicate that participants acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support refugees and immigrants in their integration into the labour market.



ANNEX I - CASE STUDIES OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANTS WHO
PARTICIPATED IN THE PILOTING PHASE AND IMPLEMENTED WHAT THEY HAVE
LEARNT INTO THEIR PRACTICE

Case 1: Mohammed

Mohammed is a 30-year-old Syrian refugee who arrived in Portugal two years ago. He has a bachelor's degree in engineering and has worked in the same field in Syria before fleeing the country. However, his credentials are not recognized in Portugal, and he has struggled to find employment. Mohammed has limited English language skills and has faced cultural barriers in his job search. Despite these challenges, he remains determined to find work in his field and contribute to Portuguese society.

Based on the provided case study of Mohammed, the consultant proposed this solution using the Supported Employment method:

Engagement:

The consultant initiated a meeting with Mohammed to establish rapport and trust. They used culturally sensitive communication methods and interpreters if necessary to ensure effective communication. During this stage, the consultant gathered information about Mohammed's background, skills, employment history, and goals.

Vocational Profiling:

The consultant conducted a comprehensive assessment of Mohammed's skills, education, work experience, language proficiency, and any other relevant factors. They explored Mohammed's preferences, strengths, and areas for development. Special attention was given to assessing Mohammed's English language proficiency and identifying opportunities for language improvement.

Job Finding:

Based on Mohammed's engineering background and experience, the consultant explored potential employment opportunities in Portuguese's engineering sector. They also considered alternative pathways to employment, such as internships, apprenticeships, training programs or even job rotation, that may help Mohammed gain relevant experience and bridge any credentialing gaps. The consultant assisted Mohammed in preparing an updated resume tailored to the Portuguese job market standards and helped him craft cover letters.



Workplace Support:

Once Mohammed secured the job, the consultant provided ongoing support to ensure his successful integration into the workplace. This included assistance with workplace culture orientation, navigating organizational policies and procedures, and addressing any cultural or language barriers he may encounter. The consultant also facilitated communication between Mohammed and his employer to address any concerns or accommodations needed to ensure his success on the job.

Job Retention and Career Development:

After Mohammed starts his job, the consultant continued to provide support to help him maintain employment and advance in his career. They regularly checked in with Mohammed to assess his progress, addressed any challenges he may face, and provided additional support as needed. The consultant worked with Mohammed to set career advancement goals and developed strategies to achieve them, such as further education or professional development opportunities.

Throughout each stage of the Supported Employment process, the consultant maintained open communication with Mohammed, involved him in decision-making processes, and tailored the support services to meet his individual needs and preferences. Additionally, the consultant documented Mohammed's progress and outcomes to measure the effectiveness of the intervention and adjust as necessary.

Case 2: Irina

Irina is a 28-year-old Ukrainian refugee who came to Portugal three years ago with her family. She has a diploma in business administration but has had difficulty finding employment due to language barriers and lack of Portuguese work experience. Irina has been volunteering at a local non-profit organization to gain experience and improve her English language skills. She is eager to find paid work and contribute to her new community.

Based on the provided case study of Irina, the consultant proposed this solution using the Supported Employment method:

Engagement:

The consultant initiated a meeting with Irina to establish trust and rapport. They have created a supportive and welcoming environment where Irina felt comfortable sharing her experiences, challenges, and goals. The consultant used culturally sensitive



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communication methods and considered providing language interpretation services where needed.

Vocational Profiling:

The consultant conducted a thorough assessment of Irina's skills, education, work experience, language proficiency, and volunteer experience. They explored Irina's career aspirations, strengths, and areas for development. Special attention was given to assessing Irina's Portuguese language proficiency and identifying opportunities for language enhancement.

Job Finding:

Based on Irina's diploma in business administration and volunteer experience, the consultant explored potential employment opportunities in the business sector in Portugal. They also considered entry-level positions, internships and job rotation that provided Irina with Portuguese work experience and helped her build her professional network. The consultant assisted Irina in updating her resume and cover letters to highlight her relevant skills and experiences.

Workplace Support:

Once Irina secured the job, the consultant provided ongoing support to ensure her successful integration into the workplace. This included assistance with understanding workplace expectations, navigating cultural differences, and building relationships with colleagues. The consultant also helped Irina identify resources and support services available in the community, such as language classes and mentorship programs.

Job Retention and Career Development:

After Irina starts her job, the consultant continued to provide support to help her maintain employment and thrive in her new role. She regularly checked with Irina to assess her progress, addressed any challenges she encountered, and provided additional support as needed. The consultant worked with Irina to set career advancement goals and develop strategies to achieve them, such as further education and professional development opportunities.

Throughout the Supported Employment process, the consultant prioritized Irina's autonomy and involve her in decision-making processes. They also adapted their support services to meet Irina's individual needs and preferences, while documenting her progress and outcomes for evaluation and adjustment purposes.



Case 3: Abdul

Abdul is a 45-year-old Afghan refugee who arrived in Portugal two years ago. He has faced numerous challenges in his journey to employment, including language barriers, cultural differences, and mental health issues. Despite these obstacles, Abdul has completed several training programs and has been able to secure part-time work in a warehouse. He is now working towards finding full-time employment and building a stable life for himself and his family.

Based on the provided case study of Abdul, the supported employment consultant proposed this solution using the Supported Employment method:

Client Engagement:

Approaching Abdul with empathy and understanding, the consultant created a safe and supportive space for him to share his experiences, concerns, and aspirations. Prioritizing trust-building, the consultant addressed any cultural sensitivities or communication barriers.

Vocational Profile Development:

Conducting a comprehensive assessment, the consultant explored Abdul's skills, education, work experience, and mental health status. They identified his career goals, strengths, and challenges, considering his part-time work experience in a warehouse and seeking opportunities for career advancement.

Job Finding:

Building on Abdul's work experience, the consultant explored full-time employment opportunities in warehouses or related industries. They leveraged Abdul's training programs to enhance his employability, assisting with resume updates, interview preparation, and accessing job search resources.

On-the-job Support:

Upon securing a full-time job, the consultant provided ongoing support for Abdul's success. This included navigating workplace dynamics, addressing accommodation needs related to his mental health, and setting realistic career growth goals. Guidance on professional development opportunities was also offered.

Off-the-job Support and Job Retention:



Continuing support post-employment, the consultant regularly checked with Abdul to monitor progress, address challenges, and provide ongoing encouragement. Collaboration with Abdul and his employer identifies additional training or support needs, facilitating access to relevant resources. Beyond the workplace, the consultant assisted Abdul in accessing additional support services that may contribute to his overall well-being and job retention. This included connecting him with community resources for mental health support, language classes, or financial assistance programs. By addressing Abdul's needs beyond the workplace, the consultant enhanced his overall stability and resilience, contributing to his long-term success.

Throughout the process, a strengths-based approach is maintained, focusing on Abdul's abilities and potential for growth. The consultant prioritized Abdul's mental health and overall well-being, ensuring holistic support that addresses both his employment goals and broader life circumstances. Regular communication and collaboration with Abdul and relevant stakeholders was emphasized for a successful outcome.

Case 4: Maria

Maria is a 32-year-old Belarussian immigrant who moved to Portugal a year ago with her husband and two children. She has a degree in psychology and has worked as a counsellor in Belarus. However, she has faced significant challenges in finding work in her field in Portugal due to language barriers and lack of Bulgarian work experience. Maria has been working as a nanny while pursuing further education and certification in Portugal. She is hopeful about finding work in her field in the near future.

Based on the provided case study of Maria, supported employment consultant proposed this solution using the Supported Employment method:

Client Engagement:

Approaching Maria with empathy and understanding, the consultant created a safe and supportive space for her to express her background, experiences, and aspirations. Prioritizing trust-building, the consultant ensures Maria feels comfortable sharing her challenges and goals. Cultural sensitivity was a paramount, as the consultant aims to address any communication barriers that may arise.

Vocational Profile Development:

Conducting a thorough assessment, the consultant explored Maria's skills, education, work experience, and language proficiency. They delved into Maria's career aspirations, identifying her strengths and pinpointing any barriers she faces in finding work in her field. Leveraging Maria's background as a counsellor in Belarus, the consultant assessed



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her transferable skills and seeks opportunities for career transition or advancement in Portugal.

Job Finding:

Building on Maria's counselling experience and ongoing education in Portugal, the consultant explores potential employment avenues in psychology-related fields. They also explore alternative pathways for gaining Portuguese work experience, such as internships or volunteer opportunities. Assisting Maria with resume updates, interview preparation, and networking within the Bulgarian psychology community was integral to this process.

On-the-job Support:

Upon Maria securing a job in her field, the consultant provided ongoing support to ensure her successful integration into the workplace. This support encompassed assistance with understanding workplace expectations, navigating cultural differences, and fostering relationships with colleagues and clients. Additionally, the consultant helped Maria identify available resources and support services in Portugal, such as language classes or mentorship programs.

Off-the-job Support and Job Retention:

Following Maria's job commencement, the consultant continues to offer support to help her maintain employment and advance in her career. Regular check-ins allowed the consultant to assess Maria's progress, address any challenges she faced, and provided additional support as needed. Collaborating with Maria and her employer, the consultant identified opportunities for professional development and career growth.

Throughout the Supported Employment process, Maria's autonomy remains a priority, with the consultant adapting their support services to meet her individual needs and preferences. Documenting Maria's progress and outcomes facilitated ongoing evaluation and adjustment.

Case 5: Oleksandra

Oleksandra is a 30-year-old Ukrainian immigrant in Portugal with a master's degree in marketing. She faces challenges in finding work due to language barriers and lack of knowledge of the Portuguese job market. Nonetheless, Oleksandra is eager to find work and contribute to her new community while supporting her family.



Based on the provided case study of Oleksandra, the supported employment consultant proposed this solution using the Supported Employment method:

Shortly: Employment consultant engaged with Oleksandra to assess her skills and aspirations, exploring employment opportunities aligned with her background. He provided support in navigating the job market, updating her resume, and preparing for interviews. The Supported employment consultant offered ongoing assistance to ensure Oleksandra's successful integration into the workplace, fostering collaboration with employers and connecting her with relevant support services.

Detailed: The employment consultant began by meeting with Oleksandra to gain a comprehensive understanding of her background, including her education, work experience, and career goals. Through open dialogue and empathetic listening, the employment consultant established a supportive relationship with Oleksandra, creating a comfortable environment for her to share her experiences and aspirations.

During the assessment process, the employment consultant delves into Oleksandra's skills and strengths, identifying areas where she can excel in the job market. They also explored any potential barriers she may face and work together to develop strategies for overcoming them.

Drawing on Oleksandra's master's degree in marketing and her previous work experience, the employment consultant helps her explore employment opportunities that align with her expertise and interests. The consultant provided guidance on navigating the Portuguese job market, offering insights into industry trends and networking opportunities.

Additionally, the employment consultant assisted Oleksandra in updating her resume to showcase her relevant experience and skills effectively. The consultant offered personalized coaching to help her prepare for job interviews, providing tips on how to articulate her qualifications confidently and professionally.

Once Oleksandra secures a job, the employment consultant continued to offer support to ensure her successful integration into the workplace. The employment consultant facilitates the introduction between Oleksandra and her workplace mentor, ensuring that she feels comfortable reaching out for guidance and assistance. In fact, in addition to supporting Oleksandra, the employment consultant also aids Oleksandra's employer to ensure a successful integration and work environment for Oleksandra. They facilitate communication between Oleksandra and her employer and offer guidance on how to effectively onboard Ivan into the team, including providing information on his role, responsibilities, and any necessary training or orientation, helping to clarify expectations and address any concerns that may arise during the onboarding process.



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Throughout Oleksandra's employment journey, the consultant remained a reliable source of guidance and assistance. They maintained regular communication with Oleksandra and her workplace mentor and employer to monitor her progress, offer encouragement, and provide additional support as needed. The employment consultant also connects Oleksandra with relevant support services, such as language classes or professional development opportunities, to further enhance her skills and career prospects.

By providing personalized support and guidance, the employment consultant empowers Oleksandra to navigate the job market effectively and achieve her career goals in Bulgaria. Through ongoing assistance and collaboration, they ensure that Oleksandra's transition to the workforce is smooth, and her potential is maximized.

Case 6: Ivan

Ivan is a 35-year-old Ukrainian immigrant in Portugal with a bachelor's degree in computer science. He faces challenges in finding work in his field due to language barriers and lack of knowledge of the Portuguese job market. Nevertheless, Ivan is eager to find work and contribute to his new community while supporting his family.

Based on the provided case study of Oleksandra, the supported employment consultant proposed this solution using the Supported Employment method:

Shortly: The SE employment consultant engaged with Ivan to assess his skills and career goals, exploring employment opportunities in the technology sector in Portugal. He provided support in navigating the job market, updating his resume, and preparing for interviews. The SE employment consultant offered ongoing assistance to ensure Ivan's successful integration into the workplace, collaborating with employers and connecting him with relevant support services.

Detailed: The SE employment consultant initiates a meeting with Ivan to gain insight into his skills, career aspirations, and challenges. They created a supportive atmosphere where Ivan feels comfortable discussing his background and goals, fostering trust and open communication.

During the assessment process, the employment consultant conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Ivan's skills and qualifications, considering his bachelor's degree in computer science. They worked together to identify potential employment opportunities in the technology sector in Portugal, leveraging Ivan's expertise and interests.

Recognizing Ivan's language barriers and unfamiliarity with the Portuguese job market, the SE employment consultant provided guidance and support in navigating job search



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strategies. He offered practical advice on networking, online job platforms, and industry-specific resources to enhance Ivan's prospects of finding suitable employment.

To strengthen Ivan's job application materials, the SE employment consultant assisted him in updating his resume to highlight his relevant experience and skills effectively. They provided personalized coaching to help Ivan prepare for job interviews, offering strategies for showcasing his qualifications confidently.

Once Ivan secures a job in his field, the SE employment consultant continues to offer support to ensure his successful integration into the workplace. The employment consultant facilitates the introduction between Ivan and his workplace mentor, ensuring that Ivan feels comfortable reaching out for guidance and assistance.

In addition to supporting Ivan, the employment consultant also helped Ivan's employer to ensure a successful integration and work environment for Ivan. He offered guidance on how to effectively onboard Ivan into the team, including providing information on his role, responsibilities, and any necessary training or orientation.

Regular check-ins with both Ivan and the mentor allow the consultant to monitor Ivan's progress and address any challenges that may arise during his transition into the workplace.

Throughout Ivan's employment journey, the consultant remains committed to providing ongoing assistance and guidance. They still maintain regular communication with Ivan and his workplace mentor to monitor his progress, offer encouragement, and provide additional support as needed. Additionally, the employment consultant connects Ivan with relevant support services, such as language classes or professional development opportunities, to further enhance his skills and career prospects.

By offering support to both Ivan and his employer, the employment consultant ensures a collaborative approach to Ivan's integration and success in his new job. Through ongoing communication and assistance, the consultant maximizes the potential for a smooth transition and a positive work experience for Ivan and his employer alike.