

Accelerating Coaching and Counseling through e-Tools and innovative Training

NATIONAL REPORT

Germany

Situation and Needs of Counseling and Guidance Practitioners/Coaches working with Hard-to-Reach Groups in Germany







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CONTENT

I. Executive Summary

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights obliges states to direct their policies towards achieving full employment to reduce existing unemployment and prevent new unemployment as far as possible. For this reason, the integration of hard-to-reach target groups into the labor market is a serious task for German politics and society.

This national report describes the target group of "hard-to-reach" and the careers guidance system in Germany. After a short definition of the target group and the local guidance system in Germany, which is both state-run and privately organized, the data collected from 11 questionnaires and three interviews with career guidance counsellors are analyzed. The aim is to provide an overview of the current situation, challenges and needs of consultants in order to develop a tailor-made online offer for the ERASMUS+ project ACCEnT.

1. Context and Background of hard-to-reach groups in Germany

In Germany, the term "hard-to-reach" usually refers to people without formal educational qualifications, semi-skilled and unskilled workers - but also "people who are distant from education" or "people who are unused to learning".

According to Klein & Reutter (2016), people are considered "low-skilled",

- if they have a formal vocational qualification but have not found a corresponding job,
- if their foreign qualifications are not recognized,
- if they have not obtained a certificate for the competences acquired in their professional activity,

¹ The expression "hard-to-reach" as the main characterization and classification of a target group is no fixed technical term in Germany and has no research tradition like in Anglophone regions.



• if they have never completed a professional career or their careers have been interrupted by frequent unemployment.

These target groups are affected by seven dimensions of educational inequality:

Social & cultural barriers	Economic Barriers	Institutional Barriers	Market disadvantage
little access to educa-	no educational offers	participation fees	lack of recognition of qual-
tional information	that are compatible	course times that	ifications and compe-
unattractiveness of the	with the occupation	are not compatible	tences (esp. clients with a
terms "education" and	participation fees	with time manage-	migration background)
"counselling"	travel costs to the	ment	expensive recognition pro-
childcare responsibili-	educational institu-	learning location	cess
ties	tion	(especially for	
lack of knowledge of		learners living in	
German		rural areas)	
Iimited appreciation of			
education			
Local Disadvantage	Professional Barriers	Subjective structures of r	meaning
lack of mobility	elimination of niche	low expectations of s	self-efficacy
limited educational op-	jobs	low self-confidence	
portunities in rural ar-	Recognition of quali-	failure to recognise t	he economic value of education
eas	fications and compe-		
lack of public transport	tences		
connections and long-			
distance journeys			
Weiss, Wiedner, Miesmer (2018), Leitfaden zur Bildungs- und Berufsberatung für Bildungsbenachteiligte, p.7.			

The integration of formally low-skilled workers into the labour market is an unsolved task in Germany. At the same time, more and more low-skilled workers are being discovered as skilled labour potential. The Report on Vocational Education and Training (2019) therefore stresses the need for more intensive career guidance and counselling in Germany (Berufsbildungsbericht, 2019, p.11).



1.1. Main characteristics of hard-to-reach groups and career guidance

In Germany, the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) is responsible for the majority of career guidance services in accordance with paragraph 29 of the Social Code, Book III (§ 29 SGB III).

By "career guidance" the SGB III understands "the provision of information and advice on career choice, career development and career change, on the situation and development of the labour market and occupations, on the possibilities of vocational education and training, on training and job search (as well as) on employment promotion services". But also the "provision of information and advice on questions of training grants and school education" are among the tasks of vocational guidance according to SGB III " to the extent that they are important for the choice of occupation and vocational education" (Krämer, 2001, p.1104). This also includes career guidance, which is provided by counsellors in schools or in career information centres of the employment offices (BIZ). In addition, career guidance offers the placement of in-company and school-based training places. In Germany, the career guidance is integrated into the general employment service. Since the abolition of the career guidance monopoly of the Federal Agency in 1998, there has also been commercial career counselling and job application training.

With an unemployment rate of 3.4 percent, Germany ranks third in the EU with the lowest unemployment rate after Malta and the Czech Republic (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2018, p. 7). While the labour market in Germany continues to develop well, the long-term unemployment sector in particular needs further support. The risk of becoming long-term unemployed is high

for those people who have so-called job inhibiting characteristics. In addition to a higher age, the rather low qualification level of the long-term unemployed in particular represents a significant obstacle to placement (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2017, p.12).



1.1.1 Definition of hard-to-reach groups: early school leavers, long-term unemployed people, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

The following is a brief overview of the target groups focused in the ACCEnT project and their characteristics in Germany.

1.1.2 Recent situation, numbers, evolution and trends in Germany

• Early school leavers

The national average of early school leavers is six percent in Germany (Bildungsbericht, 2018, p.122). Persons without a school-leaving certificate are particularly at risk of not obtaining a vocational qualification. According to the Vocational Education and Training Report (Berufsbildungsbericht 2019, p. 49) affected persons bear a higher risk of unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, and earn significantly less on average than those with a vocational qualification. Against the background of demographic development, young people are also needed as skilled workers on the German labour market.

In 2017, according to data from the microcensus, 14.2% (projected at 2.12 million) of young people between the ages of 20 and 34 in Germany had no vocational qualification and thus worse conditions for long-term qualified participation in working life. (Berufsbildungsbericht, 2019, p. 48).

NEET

The so-called NEET rate is a further indicator of how well people are able to enter the labour market. It describes the proportion of young adults who are neither in training nor in employment ("Neither in Education nor Employment or Training"). In 2017, the NEET rate in Germany for 20 to 24-year-olds was 9% (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018, p.26). Young women were slightly more affected than young men (8%) with a rate of 10% (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018, p.27).

• Long-term unemployed people

In Germany, the long-term unemployed have benefited below average from the positive development of the labour market. This is also shown by the continuing high proportion of long-term



unemployment in Germany. The number of this target group amounted to 746.000 people in March 2019 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Statistik 2019). This means 32,4% of all job seekers have been unemployed for more than one year.

The chances of finding a job are extremely low for the long-term unemployed and consistently poor. The so-called "leaving rate in employment on the first labour market and self-employment" is stagnating at 1.6 percent" (DGB, 2018, p. 1). This means that out of every 1000 long-term unemployed people, only 16 can take up gainful employment in the following month and thus end their unemployment. For this reason, long-term unemployment is one of the key problems of the German labour market.

Migrants

According to calculations based on the Microcensus 2017, 23.6% of people living in Germany have a migration background (Berufbildungsbericht, 2019, p. 50). Young people with foreign citizenship leave school more than twice as often as young people with German citizenship. Overall, the school-leaving qualifications of foreign youths are lower than those of German youths (Berufsbildungsbericht 2019, p.51). For young people of Turkish or Arab origin in particular, it is much more difficult to find a training place (Berufsbildungsbericht 2019, p.53). Possible explanatory approaches for the lower chances of placement in training for persons with a migrant background include not only the less advantageous school conditions but also different career preferences, other framework conditions such as the regional training market situation, a lack of knowledge of German, less participation in in-company work placements or the selection processes used by companies to allocate training places (Berufsbildungsbericht 2019, p.53).

Refugees

The development of the German labour market is increasingly influenced by people seeking asylum. Since refugees grew up in completely different educational systems and work contexts, their educational and vocational orientation is of particular importance in Germany. In December



2018, 456,000 job-seeking refugges were registered in Germany, including almost 175,000 unemployed (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2018, p.8). According to Stoewe (2017), it is important to offer culturally sensitive educational and career guidance for refugees, to strive for tailor-made placement in training, as well as to further develop and use competence recording procedures at an early stage.

2. Career Guidance, Counselling and Coaching with hard-toreach groups in Germany

The survey was conducted with the help of the Learning Management System (LMS) ILIAS. Using an integrated tool, ILIAS surveys can be published among users and evaluated anonymously. In Germany, eleven career counsellors filled out the questionnaire, in addition four career counsellors from church and private sector institutions provided information about their working life by means of semi-structured interviews. Due to the size and heterogeneity of the interviewees, no representative statement can be made about the population of career guidance counsellors in Germany. Individual statements by the interviewees are intended to highlight important results for the development of the ACCEnT online format.

2.1. Personal, Educational and Professional Background

The following section gives a brief impression of the current situation of career guidance in Germany based on the questionnaire and interview respondents.

2.1.1. Professionals' Characteristics

The gender distribution of the respondents was almost evenly distributed between 54.55% women and 45.45% men. The average age range of respondents varied between 41-50 years (36.36%), 31-40 years (27.27%) and 20-30 years and 51-60 years (both 18.18%) and thus reflected a balanced picture of different age groups.



2.1.2. Qualifications and Professional Training

The majority of respondents hold a Master's degree (81.82%). Just two people completed a Bachelor's degree or vocational training. The fields in which the Master's degree was completed proved to be highly heterogeneous.

Fields of stated degrees:

Vocational education					
State Certified Business Economist					
Bachelor in:					
Bachelor in Pedagogy					
Master in:					
Cultural Studies	American Literature &	Economics (VWL)	Social Work		
	Cultural Studies				
Social Pedagogy	Pedagogy	Social sciences	Sociology		

The answers to the question which courses, seminars or further training have prepared career counsellors for their work with "hard-to-reach " target groups can be divided into the following categories:

- Many years of professional experience
- Subject-specific trainings: "Systemic Consulting"; "Communication and counselling",
 "Successful counselling"; "Client-oriented Counselling"; "Conflict man-agement"; "Non-violent communication"
- In-house training: "advisory skills"; "knowledge of job profiles and the labour market"; "Courses as part of induction training to Jobcenter; "counselling training at Qualification Center (RQZ)"
- Certified training courses: "Chamber of industry and Commerce (IHK)-Coach"; "Personal Coach at distance learning university (SGD)"; "Business coach"



Many of the counselors have a very high level of education in Germany. In addition to their own training and further education, however, the counsellors consider their own wealth of experience, which they have acquired through their many years of professional experience, to be particularly helpful for their work.

The majority of the respondents work in church institutions (45.45%). The second most frequently cited institution was the private sector with 36.36%. Only 18.18% of respondents work in non-profit organisations. The institutions were specified in more detail as adult education centres (Volkshochschule), deaconries (Diakonie) and counselling centres for the unemployed at the Diakonisches Werk.

The exact professional title of the counselor was given as follows:

- Educational and vocational counsellor
- social pedagogue
- educational counsellor
- career counselor
- Job counsellor
- Professional and life counsellor
- Ecumenical unemployment counsellor
- State-certified business economist
- Business coach

Only two participants specified their occupations as "counsellors for a counselling centre for the unemployed" and as counsellors on educational issues in the vocational context (vocational orientation, reorientation, choice of studies, continuing education, financial counselling, training credit (Bildungsprämie), second chance education, competence assessment).

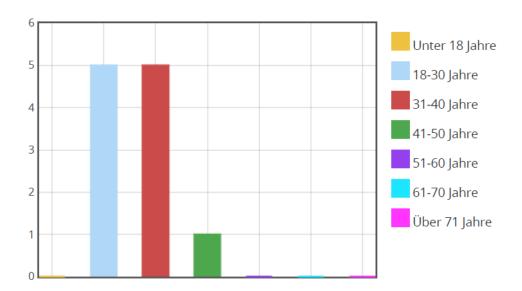


2.1.4. Collaboration and Career Development of hard-to-reach groups

The questioned counsellors work on average 30 hours per week with hard-to-reach target groups. Two of the respondents work more than 30 hours, three less than 30 hours with hard-to-reach target groups. Career Development of hard-to-reach groups mean for questioned counsellors to offer people a perspective or to point out possibilities and facilitate, mediate and support ways of doing things.

2.1.5. Clients' Characteristics

The counsellor's clients are divided into two large age groups of persons who are between 31-40 years (45.45%) and 18-30 years old (45.45%). The majority of our clients are male (66.67%). The rather low age of the clients thus shows that there is a high potential to participate in working life.





2.2. Working Challenges, Difficulties and Training Needs 2.2.1. Working Challenges and Intervention Concerns

The job description of counsellors is characterised by personal dedication but also a high level of psychological stress. The difficult life situation of the clients is reflected in the counselling situations, which are frequently used as an outlet for frustration, as a quote from a counsellor shows:

Interviewee 4:

"What is difficult to endure - but where I have learned to deal with it - is despair, hopelessness, aggression and rage."

Many of the problems experienced during work are also seen in the system of unemployment promotion and the perception of unemployment in society:

Interviewee 3:

"There is term called "group-related misanthropy"², which is a statistical value that is collected regularly. This is about which group the German population currently despises. In the past they were homeless, junkies and alcoholics, and for years now they have been the unemployed. That is a big problem. People are ashamed to be unemployed. This is due to the neo-liberal image of man – in our society everyone forges his own destiny - so the responsibility is transferred to the individual. The social system is not seen as helpful here. It is a great shame to go into the employment service. That creates retreat. As an unemployed person, you lose all your social status. With this psychological burden one is no longer open for offers of help."

² Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (2015). *Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit*. https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/214192/gruppenbezogene-menschenfeindlichkeit



As a result, career counsellors have to cope with the emotional burdens of their clients, but at the same time they have to deal with an implicit devaluation of the unemployed, which has also a negative psychological effect on their clients.

2.2.2. Experienced Working Difficulties

Difficulties of counsellors with the following target groups can be described as follows (ordered by occurrence):

- Long term unemployed: helping individuals achieve their goals (50.00%), communication (28.57%), interpersonal relationship (21.43%)
- **Migrants**: intercultural competences (47.37%), communication (31.58%), helping individuals achieve their goals (21.05%)
- Early school leavers: helping individuals achieve their goals (43.75%), communication (31.25%), interpersonal relationship (25.00%)
- **NEET's** (Not in education, employment or training): communication (42.86%), helping individuals achieve their goals (50.00%), interpersonal relationship (21.43%)

The long-term unemployed and early school leavers have a very similar profile. Both groups need intensive support to achieve their goals and specific communication techniques. For refugees and migrants, intercultural barriers are most often perceived as a problem by counsellors.

In addition to the questions asked in the questionnaire, problems such as client passivity, psychological stress and an unknown benefit of counselling were reported.

Experienced working difficulties:

Interviewee 2:

- Young people who do not manage to seek advice from themselves and use it or only go when they are expected to.
- Making people realize that counselling is useful and adds value.



- Triggering the cognitive process: I want something and achieve it by going to counselling.
- People who are not used to counselling and are not motivated or cannot do it because they are, for example, in a depressive phase.

One of the overarching characteristics of the target group of the long-term unemployed, and refugees, can be defined in a lack of verbal skills of clients, which is caused either by a lack of German language skills or by the lack of awareness of structured and career-oriented conversations.

Experienced working difficulties:

Interviewee 2:

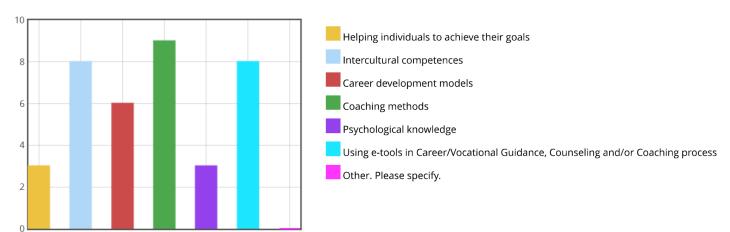
- Language. Difficulty to care for young people with an escape background who do not speak German well yet. To express oneself in a simple language so that they understand what it is all about.
- There are also German young people who do not speak. Those who are not acquainted that someone asks them how they are doing, those who are not used to talking about their feelings and needs or professional goals or who have never thought about what their goal is. To get to these people. That is a high level here, which we assume from our training and we have to go very far down here.

Verbal expressiveness as a working tool and the basis of every counselling is therefore not selfevident for the target group of hard-to-reach and is perceived as a barrier to help. Furthermore, methods learned in training and studies sometimes do not match the client's level.

2.2.3. Frequency, Motivation and Areas of Needed Training

The training needs of the respondents were highest in the areas of coaching methods (24.32%), intercultural competences (21.62%) and using e-tools (21.62%).





The need for training in the areas of psychological knowledge (8.11%) and helping individuals to achieve their goals (8.11%) was in comparison rather low.

The highest motivator for continuing learning was personal or career development (21.21%), closely followed by the need to become better at work (18.18%) and to specialise in a certain field (18.18%). While a training need for intercultural competence is partly already covered by the relevance of the topic in Germany, there is a gap in knowledge about further methods to communicate effectively with people with language barriers.

Need of more training (Interviewee 2)	No need for more training (Interviewee 2)
Conversational skills when someone just doesn't say	Intercultural competences have often been trained.
anything during counselling. For example, how do I get	Professional body offers many training courses about
hold of guys who tend to talk less? For example, you try	refugees.
to draw it on, but you can't get any further with it.	

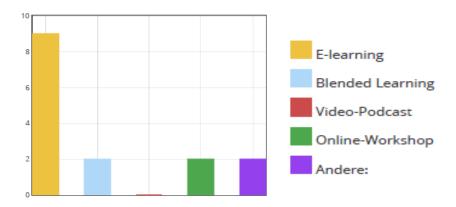
2.3. Learning Content and Environment

In the following section, the training needs of interviewed counsellors are evaluated and transferred to the development of the ACCEnT online format.



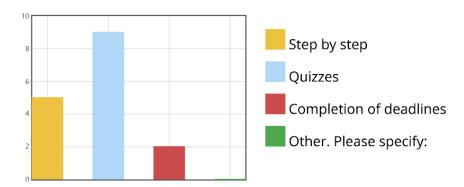
2.3.1. Content and Type of Training

The career counsellors surveyed were most interested in learning more about intervention strategies (e.g. conflict management) in online courses (58.82%). At 23.53% and 17.65% respectively, the interest in learning about methodological approaches and operational tools followed at a considerable distance. At 61.54%, the desire to participate in e-learning was very high. Blended learning (15.38%) and online workshops (7.69%) scored significantly lower.



2.3.2. The Use of E-tools and E-learning Training Structure

Quizzes (56.25%) and step-by-step training structures (31.25%) were best received by the respondents to design the online course.



The interview showed that many counsellors already have problems with the concrete definition of the term "e-Tool". Mentioned examples referred to e-mail, Facebook and Whatsapp to keep



in permanent contact with clients (especially young people, but also refugees). In addition, the examples mentioned are only used sporadically and without concrete guidance.

2.3.3. Training Schedule, Frequency, Duration and Information

A clear majority of respondents prefer training during working hours (90.91%). None of the respondents would like to learn at weekends, while only one person (9,09%) would consider learning times after work. 10 out of 11 respondents prefer short learning units of 45 minutes (90.91%). Learning units of 90 minutes are only of limited use to respondents (9.09%), while longer learning periods are impractical. The majority of respondents (90.91%) would also like to participate in the training only once a week and be informed by e-mail. Only a few consider an additional source of information via newsletters or social networks.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of the situation of career guidance counsellors in Germany has shown that the placement of hard-to-reach target groups is a persistent problem. The target group of counsellors therefore needs flexible support in their work.

The following recommendation can be made for the design of the ACCEnT e-learning format:

- Convincing of counsellors of using e-learning formats because it is not yet part of their daily work. There must be a directly visible benefit.
- The clarification of roles and tasks in counselling: The counsellor must explain his job and his benefit but also the limitations of his job for the client without being intimidating.
- The counselor must introduce terms of the professional world in simple language. Ideas of empowerment and development opportunities should be promoted.
- The reference to counselling materials that match the verbal and educational level of clients.



- A bridge must be found between the academic degrees of the consultants and the university methods learned there to the needs of the clients, in which education and profession do not bring any obvious benefit.
- In particular, the term "e-Tool" must be explained and examples given for its use.



II. Annexes and/or Appendixes

Annexe I – References

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