

Building educational bridges – Promoting further education opportunities at all stages of the migration cycle

Integration in the host country often forms the focus of the debate when it comes to educational work with refugees. Integration does not however always represent the culmination of migratory movements. Return to and reintegration in the home country, as well as renewed migration, are also possible outcomes. Moreover, return and reintegration are complex processes that involve uncertainty for refugees in precarious living situations. The German Adult Education Association (DVV) and DVV International have developed further training courses that create a space in which refugees can reflect on their competences and enhance their potentials.

Just as refugees do not constitute a homogeneous group, returnees too differ in terms of their specific starting situations and motivations. Be it because the local political situation has stabilised, or because they have failed in their attempts to integrate, or indeed because they miss family and friends – there are very many different reasons why people leave their new homes once again.

Empowering refugees who have uncertain prospects to remain

Refugees who have “poor prospects to remain”, or who come from “safe countries of origin”, are often unable to gain access to regular education and integration services in Germany. But it is precisely this vulnerable target group that needs support in the form of coaching and reflection. DVV’s pilot project entitled “Building educational bridges – further education for returnees” has been offering courses at various German Adult Education Centres (vhs) since 2018. These courses impart basic general and vocational educational skills. Course attendees receive support when it comes to reflecting on their resources and strengths via coaching and an analysis of their potential. The courses aim to enable refugees to achieve sustainable social and economic reintegration, should they decide to return voluntarily to their home countries¹, where they will receive further support through DVV International’s partner structures.



Participants and teacher of a further education course

Educators as change agents

Educational work with the highly-heterogeneous, vulnerable group of prospective returnee refugees poses a number of different challenges in the classroom: How do I as an instructor react to culturally-induced misunderstandings? What do psychosocial stress and traumatisation mean in terms of uncertain prospects to remain or the potential to return voluntarily? And how can I as an educator nonetheless manage to create a safe, appreciative learning atmosphere? In order to support educators in meeting these challenges, DVV International has worked together with a team of experts from Jordan, Palestine, Turkey and Germany to develop the advanced training course entitled “Building educational bridges – competently meeting intercultural and psychosocial challenges in teaching with prospective returnee refugees”. This international transfer of knowledge led to the production of extensive teaching and learning materials, and these were put to use as the basis for the training of around 50 multipliers and instructors in Adult Education Centres throughout Germany in an initial pilot phase.

The project is promoted by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). ●

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Information as well as teaching and learning materials for the further training course entitled “Building educational bridges” (in German only) can be found at: <https://www.dvv-international.de/materialien/lehr-und-lernmaterialien/bildungsbruecken-bauen/>

¹ Voluntary return refers either to assisted return, e.g. with the aid of the IOM (International Organisation for Migration), or to self-organised return.