

Thinking Space Paper No.14

Profiling of NEETs: Getting it right

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KIZ has many years of experience in labour market integration of (long-term) unemployed. It used the gained expertise to develop a *profiling process* composed of different modules. Each module covers a different topic and development stage of the participant and needs to be applied at a specific point in time to guarantee an effective support structure. The modules need to follow a strict order but can significantly vary in their duration. The following Thinking Space paper No. 14 describes the first profiling module called *starting point*, and provides practical support to master the first coaching session within a labour market integration programme.

The module *starting point* is the first step of a labour market integration programme and aims at getting to know the participant. From a coach's perspective, the main goals of the first 60 minutes coaching session are:

1. **General information** (20 minutes): Explain the programme to the participant /Get to know the participant's programme expectations.
2. **Determination of the starting point** (20 minutes): Working through the profiling sheet to understand participant's current status quo (e.g. German skills, language skills, school education, work experience, hobbies).
3. **Profiling of the environment** (20 minutes): Understand the underlying situation and determinants of each participant (e.g. family, friends, social system).

KIZ assumes that the majority of programme participants act as *visitor* in the initial situation. The term *visitor* is based on Steve D. Shazer's training and coaching approach¹. Shazer explains that in every effective training approach participants experiences three different stages:

- 1) **Visitor**: Often mandated (e.g. by a job centre), does not participate voluntarily in the programme; has no problem/complaint and is not motivated to change behaviour.
- 2) **Complainant**: Has a specific problem/ complaint but does not see himself/herself as part of the problem or the solution; wants a solution from his/her environment, believes that someone else is to blame for the problem/complaint.
- 3) **Customer**: Has a specific problem/ complaint and is willing to actively work on a solution. Sees himself as a part of the problem/complaint and is willing to change.

The coach needs to identify the development stage of the participant. It is important to note that no stage is more valuable or is per se better than another. The coach needs to act objectively and work in the participant's current stage rather than trying to push him to the next one. Nevertheless, based on KIZ experience, most of the participants arrive as a *visitor* to the programme² and hence their initial coaching

¹ Steve de Shazer (1988): Clues. Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy. W.W. Norton & Co.

² This is a general statement and cannot be applied to every participant

session. In this case, the coach needs to be a good *host* and explain the programme and the programme's objectives.

General information:

In the first 20 minutes of the initial coaching session the coach explains the programme and its different steps. The participant can ask questions and explain his/her expectations. Transparency from both sides regarding the programme is of great importance. This stage of the coaching provides general information. Topics covered are:

- Presentation of the service provider.
- The coach presents himself/herself. He/she talks about his/her qualifications and what makes him/her a good and qualified coach.
- Presentation of the programme, its structure, its focus and objectives.
- Expectations of the coach and the contracting authority (e.g. job centre) from the participant and how to meet them.
- The coach enquires the participant's expectations.

Determination of the starting point:

Following the initial discussion, the coach completes the *profiling sheet* to get more complete picture of the participant. The profiling questions are related to the participant's work experience and his expectations regarding a new job. **Table 1** shows part of the profiling sheet to get a better understanding of this stage:

Table 1: Section from a profiling sheet

more information					
family status:	<input type="checkbox"/>	single			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	married		Former spouse:	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	divorced			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	widowed			
Number of children			Age:		children <14 years:
German skills:					
Language skills:					
Hobbies:					
School education:					
Professional education:					
Further education:					
(Additional qualification:)					
Working experience in:					
Income:					
Preferred job/activity:					
Expected salary:					
Working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Full time		<input type="checkbox"/>	Half time
(restrictions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	only at night		<input type="checkbox"/>	in the morning
	<input type="checkbox"/>	no restrictions		<input type="checkbox"/>	in the afternoon
				yes	no
		Shift work		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Weekends		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health restrictions					
				yes	no

Source: The profiling sheet has been developed by Silke Schoolmann and KIZ Prowina and is used in their labour market integration programmes.

Profiling of the environment:

Following the determination of the starting point, the coach can move to the last stage, the *profiling of the social environment of the participant*. This stage helps the participant to reflect on his/her private and professional environment. All of us are often trapped in daily routines and do not make time for observing what is not working so well in our lives and potentially requires redirection. Here, the coach needs to be patient and take time to ask questions. The coach should be able to dig deeper if needed and make an effort to understand the participant and his/her underlying motivations. Trust is a very important component to get honest answers. If a participant is not willing to cooperate and provide a better understanding of his/her personal and professional situation, it makes sense to provide an honest feedback. If open questions remain, they should be tackled in the next meeting. Typical questions in this stage are:

- How many people are part of your family/ with how many people do you live together? How many of them are currently employed?
- How would your life change, if you had a job rather than receiving unemployment benefits from the state?
- Who would be happy about this, who wouldn't?

The aim of these 20 minutes is to understand the participant's personal and professional relationships and their impacts on his/her life.

The initial coaching session is used to get a better understanding of the participant and give her/him the opportunity to understand the programme. The coach might discover some strengths and motivations of the participant. It is possible that there are behavioural patterns or experiences – so called hidden agendas - that prevent the participant from actively participating or benefitting from the programme. Such hidden agendas could be gender issues, for instance the participant could be a woman in a more traditional setting. Her also conservative husband is currently unemployed. The woman is very open and eager to work, but refuses to take a full-time job. Here, a role model could prevent the woman to become the main income provider in the household. If the coach suspects such a pattern, an open conversation with the participant is advised without being confrontational. Another hidden agenda could be that the participant works in the informal sector.

In summary, the *starting point determination* is an effective way to use a first coaching session to get to know the participant and his/her background, interests and expectations. After completing the profiling form, the next module focusses on his/ her interest, potentials and labour market opportunities. This module is explained in the thinking space No.15.