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Area of action “Employability“

Analysis of cantonal reports for 2014

One of the priorities of specific integration support is to help migrants find work on the labour market. In 2014, the Confederation and the cantons spent around CHF 29.6 million in this area of action. A substantial portion of the funding was used for the linguistic and occupational Integration of temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees. In addition, the cantons also supported activities to help teenagers and young adults with a migration background to pursue vocational education training.

Employment leads to financial independence and interaction at work makes the entire integration process easier. However, entering the labour market can be very difficult for temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees as well as for teenagers who have recently arrived in Switzerland. One reason for this is that in many cases, the person needs to learn the local language from the ground up and may even have to undergo training. At the same time, temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees as well as teenagers who have recently arrived in Switzerland also require a certain amount of time to become familiar with the local working environment. As a result, developments in the area of action “Employability“ are aimed at developing and expanding support services for these target groups.

Integration support throughout the entire employment process

In order to improve employment prospects, measures and instruments aimed at encouraging labour market integration are focussed on helping people to acquire new language and occupational skills or to improve existing ones. Depending on the person’s age and when he/she moved to Switzerland, the aim will either be to enrol in vocational education and training or to find employment. Assistance in finding a suitable vocational education and training programme is provided to young adults who have recently arrived in Switzerland or to young temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees. In many cases, this assistance is provided in cooperation with established frameworks. In individual cases, start-up funding will be provided to develop new services. This was the case for the Canton of Thurgau, for instance.

For teenagers with a migration background who completed compulsory education in Switzerland, emphasis is placed more on parental education and individual support measures. In 2014, existing labour market integration programmes were continued, expanded or realigned under cantonal integration programmes. The main focus is placed on temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees. An increasing number of cantons also carry out assessments of a person’s potential in order to establish integration plans and provide targeted support to temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees. Following realignment of services, the cantons also added integration services for traumatised refugees and established triage centres. In

the Canton of Fribourg, for example, all temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees undergo an assessment of their potential. The results are then used to prepare an individual integration plan. If possible, the person is encouraged to undergo training in order to achieve lasting integration in the labour market.

Cooperation with employers

In addition, all funding and support measures for target groups require labour market integration as well as closer cooperation with employers. These two factors are essential when it comes to facilitating the integration of migrants. In 2014, various cantons took or planned measures aimed at encouraging employers to become more involved in integration support efforts. For example, the Canton of Geneva began awareness-raising efforts targeting temp agencies in an effort to improve the employment prospects of temporarily admitted foreigners. The Canton of Bern is working closely with employers' associations to reach out to foreign workers. The cantons have also focussed on cooperation with social partners in an effort to improve language learning at the workplace.

Coordination of integration work

In 2014, cooperation between cantonal institutions was further developed and expanded. Interdepartmental working groups serve as an interface between integration support, labour market supervision, vocational education and training and welfare. This enables the entire process of interinstitutional cooperation to be funded and sustained. In the Canton of Neuchâtel, for instance, integration support was included in the canton's overall labour market integration strategy.

Canton of Graubünden: "partial wages" pilot project

The Canton of Graubünden helps temporarily admitted foreigners and refugees to find jobs on the labour market and to enrol in vocational education and training. These efforts serve to complement existing measures and innovative projects. Working with social partners, the canton launched the "partial wages" pilot project in 2014. The aim is to facilitate the transition from a traineeship to fixed employment or training. Within the framework of this project, employers may pay less than the local minimum wage for the given branch for a maximum period of two years. In order to qualify, an agreement must be signed indicating what general and specific occupational goals must be met and what part-time training (language courses, general education, vocational courses) must be pursued. The aim is to enable workers to improve their skills, thereby improving their chances for lasting and sustained occupational integration.

Additional information: Canton of Graubünden Integration Office,
www.gr.ch/DE/themen/Integration/Pdf/merkblatt_teillohn.pdf