

# CASE STUDY

The Story of Tareq and Zaim:

Flexible Frameworks for

Learning and Information,

Advice and Guidance



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

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**GOOD  
GUIDANCE**  
Stories 2.0

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Competence	2
Abstract/Introduction/Background	2
Key Words	3
Key Characters	3
The Case Study Story	4
Questions, Comments and Topics of Discussion	8

## Competence

Design and implement strategies for career development.

This involves understanding the needs of the target population; establishing aims, objectives and delivery methods for career development activities; agreeing roles and responsibilities in delivery; providing training and development opportunities for people involved in delivery; providing and customising materials; reviewing, evaluating and modifying; supporting implementation of a quality-assurance strategy.

## Abstract/Introduction/Background

### Abstract

This case study takes a closer look at the CEDEFOP Competence 'Design and Implement Strategies for Career Development'. It aims to encourage reflection on how it can be applied when the framework for learning and IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) is very flexible on the one side, but at the same time the practitioner and client face many uncertainties.

It focuses on the professional integration of refugees. With this client group it is most important to provide orientation in the new educational and labour market system and a careful development of career design strategies within this system from the very beginning. Additionally, the special situation of refugees entails many situations that highlight their need to find work and earn money very quickly upon arrival. At the same time refugees often face many bureaucratic and other obstacles that hinders them to find a decent job in a profession corresponding to their interests. This often causes the need to develop short-term and long-term strategies for career development in parallel.

### Introduction

Zaim is a job coach for refugees. He supports refugees with their professional orientation, recognition of their foreign diploma and certificates and with their job search as well as job applications. One of his clients is Tareq, a 26-year-old man who fled from Iraq. He arrived in Berlin with his family in December 2015. Zaim and Tareq met in February 2017 and worked together for almost two years until Tareq found a formation and finally a job.

### Background

In 2015 and 2016 about 70.000 refugees arrived in Berlin<sup>1</sup>. With this sudden increase of asylum requests, the city created many supporting structures to cope with the new demand in services. However, at the same time authorities and social agencies were overwhelmed by the sheer number of additional requests which meant that many processes were very slow. This concerned for example dealing and assessing asylum requests, issuing work permits, distributing places in language classes as well as granting social benefits. For the city it was a priority to support the labour market integration of those refugees who were likely to have their asylum request accepted and stay in Berlin. As one result of this challenging situation the job coaching program for refugees was created.

### The JOBCOACHING programme

Job coaching for refugees is a program by the Senate Administration for Integration, Labour and Social Services of the Land Berlin. Its primary aim is to support refugees with their professional orientation and to help them gain the necessary qualifications they need to integrate into the German labour market. Guidance providers can apply for funding through the job coaching for refugees' programme to finance the salaries of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.berlin.de/laf/ankommen/aktuelle-ankunftszahlen/artikel.625503.php>

job coaches. 27 job coaches work at 8 different providers throughout Berlin<sup>2</sup>. Each job coach works with approximately 40 clients. Clients are usually accompanied for a duration of 6 months with at least one consultation per month. However, the duration can be extended if needed. The job coaching programme is voluntary and free of charge.

### The IAG provider - Pegasus gmbh

Zaim is job coach at Pegasus GmbH. Pegasus GmbH is a social business with long experience in offering support for professional and social (re-)integration of disadvantaged people. Since 2017 Pegasus GmbH receives funding by the job coaching for refugees' programme. The current team for refugees consists of 5 job coaches (female and male) with very different professional backgrounds including different migration backgrounds. The majority has relevant native language skills to work with refugees. Thus, coaching is available in German, English, Arabic, Farsi and French.

The focal points of its work include support in finding internships and jobs, clarifying and identifying career paths, preparing application documents and, if necessary, providing further training opportunities. If required job coaches can also accompany clients to institutions and authorities, contact companies and meet with potential employers.

The job coaching for refugee's project follows an active outreach approach. That's why the recruitment of new participants (clients) often takes place in refugee shelters, during employment fairs or through direct contact with social workers who already work with refugees.

## Key Words

- job coaching for refugees,
- information, advice and career guidance,
- flexible learning,
- career development.

## Key Characters

### Zaim - the job coach

Zaim has been a job coach since February 2017. He has completed his degree in Computer Science in Cairo and his MBA from the University of Leipzig. After graduating from his MBA, he experienced difficulties in finding a job that he was passionate about. Thus, he worked in different smaller jobs and volunteered with refugees in 2016. When he found an online announcement for a job coaching position he applied and was accepted. Since then, he has been continuously improving his professional development and coaching techniques through training courses organised by the job coaching programme as well as independent learning.

He really enjoys his job as it feels meaningful to him. Moreover, he can identify with his client group as he shares some similar experiences. Zaim also arrived in Germany from a foreign country: he had to deal and understand requirements of the Berlin job market and experienced similar communication barriers. Based on his experiences and his language skills in Arabic – which is spoken by most of his client group - he is very

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<sup>2</sup> November 2019

empathetic to his clients' needs and can offer them targeted career guidance.

### **Tareq – the job seeker**

Tareq is a 26-year-old man from Iraq. He lived there as part of the Yezidi minority, who is highly oppressed in this region. He went to school for 11 years, but he did not finish his high school degree. Therefore, most of his jobs in Iraq were low-skilled assistance jobs and he didn't follow a clear career path. Tareq arrived in Germany in December 2015. He came together with his pregnant wife and her 2 brothers (13 and 15 years old) by a rubber boat that carried around 45 people, passing the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Greece and then making their way to Germany.

## **The Case Study Story**

In 2017 the job coaching programme just started. Coaches would often go to refugee shelters to present the programme and to talk about the possibility to get support with finding a professional career and a job in Germany.

Zaim met Tareq in a refugee shelter where he lived with his wife, his one-year old child and his wife's two brothers who he had the custody for. Tareq took part in a group session about the job coaching programme and was immediately interested. He was very eager to find work and agreed to a meeting with Zaim. In their first session he told Zaim about his current situation and the problems he's been facing to find work.

**Zaim:** *"Good morning Tareq. Nice to see you again. I'm glad you decided to go ahead with the job coaching programme."*

**Tareq:** *"Good morning Zaim. Of course, thank you for the opportunity. I need a job very urgently so I hope you can help me. I'm new to Germany and I'm not sure how to go about finding a job."*

**Zaim:** *"I can understand your worries. I also came here a few years ago and I know how difficult it can be."*

**Tareq:** *"I must take care of my family and I need work to be able to stay here."*

**Zaim:** *"When have you applied for asylum and what is your current legal status?"*

**Tareq:** *"I applied straight away, that was about 15 months ago and I'm still waiting for an answer. I'm quite optimistic to get a positive response due to the situation in my country, however it might take time to get the approval."*

**Zaim:** *"Ok, but that's a good start. And do you speak any German or are you currently enrolled in a German language course. To get a job here, you are required to have at least B1 German level."*

**Tareq:** *"Yes, I've been studying German for a year now and have completed the A2 level. I go to my German class every day but it's difficult; I don't feel I make a lot of progress. Besides that, I spend a lot of time taking care of my daughter, looking for childcare and trying to find a flat. It's a lot at once. What do you think I should do?"*

**Zaim:** *"It's very important that you are learning German and that you go to a language school. I know that it's hard, especially if you have other things on your mind. Nevertheless, it's the first step in order to find a job and long-term perspective here. I recommend that you keep going to the school so you can take a formal exam. However, you should also try other ways to improve your German. For example, there are language apps that you can download for free. If you do 10- 15 minutes every day that would be a good start. I would also suggest*

*you try to do some volunteering with a German organisation. [Zaim gives him a pile of papers] Here is a document with a few organisations that you can contact; we've worked with them in the past. If you need any help you can also email me. It's a good opportunity to practise your German in a real context and you also learn more about the culture. It's important to try and integrate as much as possible until you have your asylum approved and can work here. Try to speak and listen to the language in everyday situations, for example when you are in a supermarket or when you are on the bus etc. Next time we meet we will speak about your career options. Can you tell me what you did in the past and what kind of jobs you are interested in?"*

**Tareq:** *"Yes, I've heard of an App that's pretty good. Some other people in the shelter use it. I will try it out. I'm not sure what job I want to do yet. In Iraq I worked in different jobs such as construction or as a driver, but I don't have proper career and I don't want to do these jobs again. But I'm not sure what I want to do long-term? Thanks for the list, I will have a look at this at home. And what about finding a flat and childcare. Can you help me with that?"*

**Zaim:** *"I will speak to my manager but I'm not sure we can support you with this. Next time we will discuss your options in finding a job here and find out what you are interested in."*

A few minutes later Tareq left the office. Despite the overall difficult situation, he had a very positive mindset and was clearly motivated to improve his level of German and to find work in Berlin. He was also very open to discuss different career paths since he couldn't wait to start working.

Zaim was happy with the consultation. The first meeting with a client is always very important for him. He made the experience that job seekers are more likely to share their stories and to talk more openly with him once they have established a good foundation. This also helps to find out about his clients' interests and informal learning skills.

Despite being satisfied with the first meeting, Zaim was not sure how to help Tareq to prioritise his needs. Therefore, he went to talk to the management about Tareq's situation. He explained his manager how Tareq's high motivation to work was impeded by the legal and structural obstacles. He told her that the first counselling session focused on managing and aligning expectations with the current possibilities. For Zaim it was important to find ways to make Tareq see his learning progress, especially with the German language and the German culture but he also wanted to help him find a place to live and a nursery for his daughter. His manager was very open to hear about Zaim's case. She reassured Zaim that his coaching was going in the right direction and highlighted that he should follow Pegasus holistic approach, that is taking both the person and their environment into consideration. In Tareq's case this included his housing and family situation, his language skills as well as cultural characteristics and existing qualifications. Additionally, she advised Zaim to guide him to relevant websites to find flats and childcare and to get in contact with psychosocial cooperation partners. Nevertheless, Zaim's manager also stressed that he should focus on finding Tareq a job or training course in first place. That way, Tareq could have a long-term perspective to stay in Germany. Moreover, this would also help him to solve his other problems, such as getting a flat and getting his daughter a place in a nursery.

After speaking with his manager, Zaim felt a lot more confident on how to prioritise Tareq's needs and how to advise him on his career options. In their next meeting a month later, they discussed Tareq's long term career perspectives. Besides a general discussion Zaim used competence cards for immigration counselling to find out more about Tareq's passion and his skills. These cards show and identify different competencies such as social, personal and technical skills, as well as interests etc. and are particularly relevant for immigrants who often come without training. They are available in Arabic and can be used flexibly, depending on the jobseekers needs. Zaim felt they were a good tool to identify Tareq's competences, especially as he didn't have a formal education. Zaim was very open to try this method and he very much liked the practical and visual approach.

Looking at Tareq's hobbies and interests it became clear that he would like to work with people. He told Zaim

that he would like a career in a field where he could provide support or help to others. At the end of the session Zaim prepared a list of jobs that he thought were suitable for Tareq. He guided him towards working with the elderly and social care jobs. The reason behind this was firstly, that there were many jobs in this field and secondly, it also reflected Tareq's interests. Zaim explained him that we would need to apply for a formal training to become a geriatric nurse and to have a career in this field. Tareq felt very positive about the possibility to start a training course to work with the elderly. Thanks to this counselling he was also felt a lot more confident about his career and his skills.

In the following months Zaim and Tareq met regularly to work together on his applications and to find appropriate courses.

Some months into the counselling Tareq received a negative answer about his asylum request. He was very upset and discouraged by this notification. Although he filed an objection, he was very insecure about his future and the possibility to stay in Germany. As a result, he lost the motivation and energy to work on his professional development.

**Zaim:** *"Good morning Tareq, how are you doing today?"*

**Tareq:** *"I am okay. (Zaim notices that's Tareq's tone different to the other meetings)."*

**Zaim:** *"Is everything alright?"*

**Tareq:** *"Ummm, well, no. Actually, it's not."*

**Zaim:** *"Would you like to talk about it? Sometimes it helps to talk to someone."*

**Tareq:** *"Well, the foreigner's office denied my request to stay in Germany. I really don't know what to do! I have to support my family and I don't want to go back to my country. Do you think should I keep looking for a job?"*

**Zaim:** *"Yes definitely. Having work is an important factor in the decision to stay in Germany."*

**Tareq:** *"Do I need to find a job with a high salary to stay in Germany?"*

**Zaim:** *"No, you don't. For now, you just need to find any job to show that you are willing to work and to integrate in Germany. Of course, ideally, it is a job that you want to do long-term, but I would recommend you take any job offer you get at the moment. In the meantime, we will continue to focus on a career in nursing care as previously discussed. Are you still doing your voluntary work and working on your applications?"*

**Tareq:** *"Yes."*

**Zaim:** *"Good, this is very good. And do you talk in German or English at work?"*

**Tareq:** *"Most of the time, I speak German. I only switch to English when I cannot express myself."*

**Zaim:** *"Okay, that's great. This also helps you with your job search and writing your applications. I suggest you ask your supervisor to give you a reference letter that proves that you have been working voluntarily for more than 2 years now. You can include this in your applications. Also, next time you go to the foreign office, please show them that letter."*

**Tareq:** *"Do you think they will change their decision?"*

**Zaim:** *"I cannot promise that, but it will buy us some time, at least until you improve your German level."*

**Tareq:** *“I hope so”.*

**Zaim:** *“Do you still use the Language App I recommended you?”*

**Tareq:** *“Yes.”*

**Zaim:** *“Do you use it every day?”*

**Tareq:** *“Well, not every day, but 2 to 3 times a week.”*

**Zaim:** *“Then please try it every day and please don’t be too hard on yourself. One level 10-15 minutes every day is a good target. And remember my German teacher always said that we learn the language by communicating. Apps can help you to know some words, but it will never teach you the entire language. The more you communicate with locals, the faster you learn.”*

**Tareq:** *“How much time do you think I need to speak German at a high level that will allow me to work here?”*

**Zaim:** *“It all depends on you, but I believe if you keep practicing every day and try to communicate in German, you will see great progress very soon. In our next meeting we will do a rehearsal for a job interview to work as a nurse in an elderly home. And it will be all in German. Deal?”*

**Tareq:** *“Deal (shows thumb up).”*

**Zaim:** *“That means your homework is to prepare the German vocabulary I’ll give you after the meeting and try to practice pronouncing these sentences.”*

**Tareq:** *“Will do.”*

Zaim and Tareq make an appointment for the rehearsal.

A couple of months later Tareq’s asylum request was approved, which meant that he could officially start working and finding a vocational course.

Once his legal status was confirmed, the counselling sessions focused more and more on Tareq’s long-term perspectives in the field of elderly care. Together they set targets on how many job applications Tareq should send out in one month, they simulated job interview sessions and discussed the feedback that Tareq received. Zaim encouraged Tareq to take the chance and to go to every interview that he was offered. This way he could practice his German and performance, get used to the interview situation and questions, as well as to learn from the experience and feedback. Zaim accompanied Tareq to one of his interviews. In the beginning Tareq took every job that would pay. He worked for example in parcel delivery, but he did not like it. At the same time, he continued with his volunteering at the Berliner Tafel<sup>3</sup>.

One day, Tareq talked with one of the other volunteers about his career plan. His colleague suggested Tareq to become a paramedic, which is a 6-months course. Tareq discussed his career change with Zaim, who encouraged him to pursue it. Together they found a vocational course for Tareq and he applied to become a paramedic. He was accepted on the course.

Even though Tareq was used to different ways of learning German and to have conversations with different

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<sup>3</sup> Places where persons and families with low income can get food for no or very little cost, that was donated by supermarket or other shops because they couldn’t sell it anymore.



people, the speed and density of the course were very challenging. He had to learn new vocabulary for very specific subjects such as anatomy and was very afraid to fail the final exams. Although the regular counselling sessions of the job coaching project had finished with the start of the training course Zaim stayed in touch with Tareq to know how the course was going and if everything was ok. When Tareq told Zaim about his difficulties and his fear to fail the course Zaim reminded him about the progress and journey he has already undertaken to get where he is now. He motivated and encouraged him to do the exams.

In the end, Tareq finished the course successfully. He is now employed at an ambulance service. Thanks to this job he is now able to take care of his family.

The situation Tareq encountered when arriving in Germany was challenging; he faced many hurdles before being able to fully integrate in the German labour market. Zaim's holistic approach - considering the person, his environment and culture - together with the flexible framework of learning German helped Tareq to prioritise his needs. Reacting to the given circumstances Tareq and Zaim developed a short-term and a long term-strategy for career development in parallel which in the end led to a sustainable career path that Tareq was passionate about.

## Questions, Comments and Topics of Discussion

- Which strategy and steps of career development do you recognise during the job coaching?
- Which critical moments do you see in the job coaching process of Tareq and do you think Zaim gave him good support?
- Which aspects of flexibility do you see during the job coaching process of Zaim and Tareq?
- If Tareq was your client would you have worked with him in a similar way? Or what would you have done differently?
- Are there IAG support structures focused on refugees in your local context? Are they similar to this job coaching programme? Do you see shortcomings in your context or in the job coaching programme?
- How would you describe the management's reaction to Tareq's case?
- Do you think involving management has helped with Tareq's career guidance? If yes / no, please explain why?
- Do you think management should get involved in the guidance process or should it be separate from it? Please explain your answer.

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