In the recruitment of skilled workers from countries outside the European Union, the Triple Win Pilot Project focuses on the interests of German companies, foreign skilled workers, and the countries of origin – benefiting all three groups.

**A TRIPLE WIN FOR EVERYONE**

24,595 foreign doctors work in Germany.

93,100 skilled workers from other countries were working in the German health system in 2011. That’s six per cent of all employees in the sector.

16,000 doctors with a migration background come from Europe.

Source: Vera Zylka-Menhorn, Mangel an Gesundheitsfachkräften ein globales Phänomen, published in Deutsches Ärzteblatt, 19 October 2012.

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Text Gabriele Rzepka  Photos Markus Kirchgessner
It’s 1 p.m. in Krankenhaus Nordwest (Northwest Hospital) in Frankfurt am Main, and the afternoon shift is just starting. Almir Dedic, Emir Kurahovic and Belkisa Trakic run through some patient data with Klaus Engel, the deputy head of nursing management. Then the three nurses hurry back to their wards. There’s a lot to do: they have intravenous drips to prepare, blood pressure to check, lunch trays to clear away, patients to settle, and dressings to change. The three Bosnians have been working in this Frankfurt hospital for the past five months. They all qualified in nursing in their home country, where they undertook four years of training, including a six-month workplace. But there was no prospect of finding work in Bosnia: ‘There are no jobs in Bosnia – none at all. It makes no difference whether you’re young or old. I did some casual work as a tiler, and Almir was a storeman,’ says Emir Kurahovic. With the unemployment rate in Bosnia hitting more than 40%, the three nurses were frequent visitors to the local job centre. It was there that they heard about the possibility of working in Germany. ‘It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, because when I was a child, I lived here in Germany for six years, during the Balkan war,’ says Emir Kurahovic. Belkisa Trakic and Almir Dedic also spent part of their childhood in Germany. Dedic went to school in Wetzlar for seven years. ‘Coming to Frankfurt was a bit like coming home,’ he laughs.

The Bosnian job centre put the three nurses in contact with the Triple Win programme (see Box). They were invited to attend a selection interview, where they submitted their applications. Interviews with staff from the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) then followed. The headhunters put the candidates through their paces, checking their training, references, professional experience, background, German language skills and motivation – everything had to be right. ‘We were never offered candidates who were anything less than outstanding,’ says Klaus Engel from the nursing management team at Nordwest. ‘We conducted our own telephone interviews as well, in order to form an impression of our future co-workers. After that, we went ahead and appointed them.’

Labour regulations mean that the nurses’ employment period in Germany is initially limited to 18 months. For their Bosnian qualifications to be recognised in Germany, the young people have to sit a test and submit numerous documents. The hospital’s support is invaluable here. Klaus Engel and his team deal with most of the red tape, ensuring that the relevant certificates and references are to hand, and arranging translations and authentication. The hospital also

> AT A GLANCE

Threefold benefits

With the Triple Win Pilot Project, the Federal Employment Agency’s International Placement Services (ZAV) and GIZ have jointly developed new, sustainable and effective approaches to recruiting foreign skilled workers for the German labour market in response to German demographic trends. Under the pilot scheme, applicants from countries outside the EU are recruited to fill vacancies in German companies. This form of labour migration complements domestic labour market measures such as improving training, raising the retirement age, and increasing the percentage of women in employment.

The main purpose of the pilot project is to reconcile the divergent interests of the German labour market, the home countries and the workers themselves so that everyone benefits. For the skilled workers, labour migration is an opportunity for personal and professional development. Many of them take their new-found skills back home later, thus benefiting their country of origin. In home countries with high unemployment, the scheme helps to ease the pressure in the labour markets and boosts the economy, as labour migrants generally send money back home to support their families. And German employers gain access to well-qualified staff.

Transparent recruitment, selection and migration procedures which comply with the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel support the attainment of this triple win scenario and allow other gains to be made as well. The procedures, which are agreed with the relevant authorities and agencies in the home countries, are intended to prevent corruption in the recruitment process, irregular migration, human trafficking, wage dumping and excessive out-migration of skilled workers. The pilot scheme is therefore intended to test the parameters for responsible, long-term mobility of skilled workers in professions other than nursing as well.
organises induction courses to familiarise the Bosnians with German standards of care, hospital procedures and quality management. In Emir Kurahovic’s view, this is very sensible: ‘Our training focused more on medical aspects. The nursing requirements that are an integral part of German healthcare play less of a role in Bosnia: in Bosnian hospitals, it’s up to the relatives to look after the patients.’ But the highly motivated recruits quickly made up for their initial lack of knowledge in areas such as the correct positioning of patients, personal hygiene, and medication and treatment regimes, as Klaus Engel confirms: ‘Within two or three months, our three new co-workers had acquired the skills they need to take charge of their own area of work and provide patient care unsupervised.’

The smooth transition was also partly due to the good working conditions in Nordwest – and to the attitude of their co-workers, who gave the Bosnians a warm welcome and intensive support during their first few weeks in Frankfurt. Outside work, too, Trakic, Dedic and Kurahovic have settled in quickly: old school friends with whom they had remained in contact were looking forward to seeing them again, and they quickly made friends in the nurses’ home where they live.

An eye on the future

Almir Dedic works in the intensive care unit of the Department for Internal Medicine. Here, patients’ cardiological and oxygen saturation data are monitored and displayed on a screen. As soon as he arrives on duty, he carefully checks the levels for the patients in his care. But the patients don’t stay on this ward for long. As soon as their condition starts to improve, the doctors move them from intensive care to a regular ward. Dedic is delighted when his sick patients start to recover and no longer need him. Intensive care medicine is his chosen field for the future too. ‘Once my qualifications have been recognised, I’d like to undertake further training and specialise in emergency and intensive care medicine,’ he explains. He is already an ambulance service volunteer with the German Red Cross; the extra training would be useful here too.

Emir Kurahovic also hopes to undertake further training. He works in trauma surgery, a specialist field which was new to him when he arrived in Germany. He’s settled into the job very quickly and would like to specialise in wound treatment, with a view to becoming a wound manager and expert in wound healing. ‘I don’t want to stay in general nursing for the rest of my life,’ he explains. ‘I want to progress; otherwise, every job gets boring after a while. Germany offers me the best prospects for that.’ Belkisa Trakic is on a similar track. She works in Nordwest’s Neurological Department and is keen to undertake further training in neuro intensive care.

The three nurses’ ambition and commitment are not only focused on advancing their own careers, however. They all want to go back to Bosnia some day and improve standards of nursing in their home country’s hospitals and health centres. ‘We have already learned so much and we want to continue to build our specialist skills. It would be nice if some day, we could share our knowledge with hospitals in Bosnia, through courses or training programmes.’
At present, though, the job market and wage prospects in Bosnia offer no incentive to return. Anyone who does manage to find a job is unlikely to earn more than €200 to €400 a month. And yet food prices, according to Almir Dedic, Belkisa Trakic and Emir Kurahovic, are almost as high as in Germany. So the three are hoping that their 18-month residence permits will be extended – not least because their earnings are helping to support friends and family in Bosnia and thus improve their prospects for the future.

How does cooperation with GIZ, via the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), benefit the Federal Employment Agency?

For three decades now, CIM – a joint venture between the Federal Employment Agency’s International Placement Services (ZAV) and GIZ – has been the recruitment agency for German development cooperation. CIM complements the two partners’ own service portfolios by placing specialist and management personnel with employers in partner countries with which the German Government engages in international cooperation. Up to now, this has taken place through the Integrated Experts and Returning Experts programmes. But there has been an ongoing debate at board level about possible ways of utilising the existing cooperation to jointly manage labour migration to Germany, thus creating synergies between the labour market and development policy. The starting point is the expected substantial shrinkage of the available workforce in the EU and Germany resulting from demographic change, the health sector being a particularly sensitive area. So we agreed to launch this joint pilot scheme. A strategy for temporary labour migration was developed, trialled and evaluated for specific occupations where there is a shortage of skilled workers. The project will end this year, and discussions about an extension are currently under way.

What’s the innovative feature of the Triple Win concept compared with CIM’s recruitment of Integrated and Returning Experts?

First and foremost, of course, it’s the direction of the recruitment process: instead of recruiting for other countries, we’re placing staff in Germany. When we send experts abroad, the focus is on the needs of the developing and emerging countries, but here, the direction is reversed – it’s about Germany’s labour market needs. This is changing the roles of both partners in the joint venture. Of course – and this is where GIZ’s contribution comes in – we take into account the interests of the countries of origin and the interests of the migrants themselves, hence the name ‘Triple Win’.

Interview: akzente

Monika Varnhagen, Director of the Federal Employment Agency’s International Placement Services (ZAV)

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