



## Intellectual Output 2

# Requirements and Preferences

of Lecturers, Students and Career Counsellors dealing with building up Competences needed in Settings of Counselling for Refugee and Migrant Integration into the Labour Market

### Transnational Synthesis of the Outcome of national Delphi-Reports

Karl-Heinz P. Kohn

Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (HdBA), Mannheim

#### Content

Introduction .....	2
Procedure and Expert Profiles .....	2
Questionnaire Answers and Interview Review.....	3
What are main or typical concerns refugee consultants bring into settings of career guidance and counselling (CGC)? .....	4
Knowledge Gaps.....	5
Language.....	7
Access to and Integration into the Labour Market.....	8
Laws and Regulations of Access.....	9
Recognition of foreign Qualifications .....	9
Methods of Assessing Clients' Potential and Empowerment .....	11
Supportive Measures and Labour Market Schemes.....	11
Trauma and Discrimination.....	12
Additional Notes .....	14
Conclusion and Discussion.....	15
Appendix and References.....	16

## Introduction

The aim of CMinaR is to provide pilot courses of higher education and further training in public employment services to strengthen vocational and career counsellors in coping with new challenges that arise from a growing refugee population and subsequently rising numbers of clients and settings with refugee background. Scientists can deductively detect competences that are to be fostered, intensified or even added in a counsellor's portfolio. But it is crucial also to hear what a new situation is empirically showing in real life's practice of counselling and it is therefore that CMinaR wants to base its design of courses on information that is gathered from experts' Delphi including the accumulated knowledge of researchers and lecturers as well as practitioners in counselling themselves.

The following transnational report tries to focus on the main results important to be considered in the later design of courses deriving from five national Delphi study activities in Germany, Italy, Sweden, Turkey and in the United Kingdom. The national reports – being much more in details – are presented in the appendix to this overview.

## Procedure and Expert Profiles

Experts were asked and interviewed about their views on topics, demands and counselling challenges that result in specific competences counsellors should or must show in settings of vocational guidance with refugee clients and in supporting their labour market integration. The Delphi studies were designed as wideband enquiry, i.e. experts in a first step were contacted using a questionnaire (you can find in the appendix to this report) and after recording and giving a résumé of their answers and information asked for a group discussion about the results so that misunderstandings could be detected and supplementations were stimulated.

The overall group of experts who could be asked and interviewed crystallised to grow considerably bigger than considered in the project's draft.

number of experts in counselling involved	DE	IT	SE	TR	UK	Σ
counsellors	27	6	3	4	4	44
lecturers / researchers	5	5	2	2	3	17
students					2	2
Σ	32	11	5	6	9	63



Whereas we did not succeed in reaching higher education students of vocational and career guidance subjects, our overall group of respondents triples the number assured in our draft – with nearly 70 percent belonging to the group we want to help being provided the competences they need.

## Questionnaire Answers and Interview Review

The questionnaire for the Delphi survey was designed reflecting the results of a similar study that was published in Germany years before the recent abrupt rise in refugee migration dealing with specific needs and demands in CGC for consultants of migrant background (Kohn 2011). These results had been deductively transferred on the refugee situation in 2017 (Kohn 2017).

Questions were<sup>1</sup>:

1. What are main or typical concerns refugee consultants bring into settings of career guidance and counselling (CGC)?
2. What would you wish to learn or train to help you tackle counselling topics and challenges in CGC settings with refugees like
  - a. knowledge gap for consultants and counsellors (respective educational system, professions, labour market, ...)
  - b. foreign language as a means of counselling (in one-to-one settings and in groups)
  - c. language as prerequisite for the integration into the educational system and into the labour market
  - d. access to the educational and vocational system and to the labour market
  - e. recognition of foreign qualifications
  - f. discrimination and traumatising
  - g. assessing clients' potential and empowerment
  - h. supportive measures and labour market schemes
3. What other topics would you wish to be addressed in tuition and training for refugees' counsellors?

The used categories of counselling topics and challenges confirmed as fruitful. The given eight subcategories were widely used and filled with material. To get a better overview and according to adjacency of some of the dimensions results in this report

---

<sup>1</sup> Here the wording of the questionnaire for counsellors. We used a second questionnaire for lecturers with questions very similar but regarding the different professional role and adding a part considering didactics.

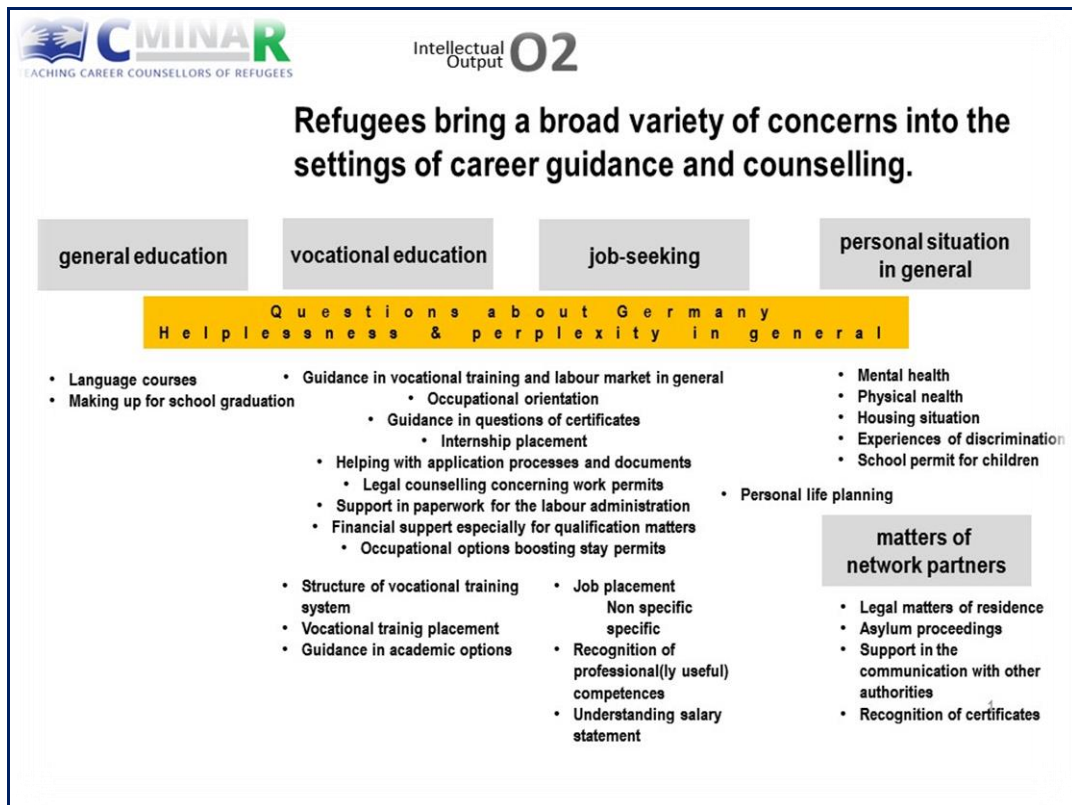


are summarised using the four major topics (1) knowledge gaps, (2) language, (3) labour market access and integration and (4) trauma and discrimination.

## What are main or typical concerns refugee consulters bring into settings of career guidance and counselling (CGC)?

This first question in our questionnaire has been interpreted broadly, not only to refer to the questions refugees actively raise in CGC contexts but also to investigate the respondents' understanding of the questions that emerge within the complex communication process counselling activities comprise.

Refugees bring a broad variety of concerns into the settings of career guidance and counselling – questions about systems and processes in the country of arrival, questions and topics that are charged with strong emotions like helplessness and perplexity due to the complex condition of deprivation, poverty and individual psychosocial difficulties caused by their forced migration.



Talks about one's plans for vocational training, higher education and occupational career in most cases come to questions of life planning and design in general. Talks with refugees about those topics go much further and into more fundamental questions with consultants having experienced a literal shock and an interruption of their courses of and plans for life being forced on them.

So we have all the core topics of CGC such as general education, vocational and academic education and questions of job-seeking – all of them loaded with specific challenges arising from transnational mismatch of qualification and (legal) uncertainties of stay permits and access to the different systems of education and the labour market. And on top of that we have questions and topics of generally navigating in a new country, a new society and their systems (legal, political and social). Not rarely consultants also request active assistance by a consultant they learned to trust and see as a partner who is really interested in their well-being. And there are fundamental questions of coping with a situation in life that affects one's psychological fundamentals and self-concept.

Counsellors' competences that are essential here belong to the fields of factual level – intensified and fortified with the special topics of migration – but also to networking with other players in the field and not at least to psychological strength and self-limitation.

## Knowledge Gaps

The dimension 'knowledge gap' stands for the challenges that arise from a lack of knowledge that both sides in counselling, the consultant and his or her counsellor, have to tackle. On the one side the refugee client cannot be expected to bring all the basic information about systems and processes in education and labour into counselling that session with native consultants are built on. On the other side counsellors lack substantial information about systems and processes of the refugees' countries of origin to adequately assess on what kind of qualifications and potentials a career in the receiving country can be based on.

Responding experts made fairly clear how many topics and perspectives are to be addressed under this label of 'knowledge gap'. It's not only about differences in the educational systems of both sides or in the pattern of occupational fields. It is also about differences in the attribution of prestige and in a "multicultural approach to wellbeing".

But knowledge gap is not all about differences. Our experts also made very clear that a deeper understanding of the process of forced migration itself is necessary to gain the

*“Even the question  
‘What would you like to be?’  
may be foreign  
to a refugee.”*



crucial empathy for refugee clients having coped with a variety of straining situations and to understand in which situations they are living at the time of counselling sessions.

And at last, the situation of the counselling setting itself might not be self-explanatory to a refugee client. Questions about the role of a counsellor, about different determinants of a decision and of the output and outcome of a session or a series of counselling meetings. All these conditions may be necessary to discuss in all relations between consulters and their counsellors, but are specifically to be detected and to be dealt with when consulters have no experience with receiving country's organisation and concept of CGC – and may come from a political and social system being more vertically differentiated and from a culture oriented to collective rather than to individualistic values.

### Course Topics Experts Demand

- background information about reasons for forced migration
- conditions of life during forced migration society and culture in countries of origin
- educational and occupational system in countries of origin
- dealing with different cultures, esp.
  - critical self-reflection of own set of values and attitudes
  - adequate communication
- deeper understanding of all relevant systems in the receiving country
- partners and actors outside own organisation
- methods of transferring basic information over language barrier

Lecturer experts pointed to the demand of more interactively designed settings of counselling and that may point to the didactics of courses for counsellors also. It was also said that critical self-reflection should play a major role as well as disclosure of counsellors' own sets of values and attitudes and their relation to own cultural backgrounds.

Course subjects that were addressed are information about the educational and vocational systems of the main

countries of origin, information about society and cultural patterns of these regions, more and frequently updated information about legal regulation of access to residence and the labour market and methods of knowledge transfer to clients with little or no previous knowledge and foreign first languages.



## Language

The dimension of `language` opens up a wide range of challenges. It is not only about assessing client's skill of the receiving country's language and coping with a setting of counselling where both partners speak different mother tongues. It's also about taking into account what being a beginning speaker of the receiving country's language means to the self-esteem of people, to the probability and effects of misunderstandings in every sphere of life (occupational and private), to ensuring the functionality of communication it counselling itself, in communication with network partners, in supporting measures, especially in training courses for clients, in the educational system and in the vocational system clients want to be integrated in. And it means to address all these challenges on every of the three levels of communication: verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal.

*“There can be two frustrated people who meet in the conversation.”*

Demands of counsellor experts here were many and differentiated – maybe as a result from having experienced very direct and concrete impact of the language gap in their talks. (See box on the left.)

There was also the idea of being introduced to a special dictionary designed especially for the use in fields of work, labour, occupations, workplace and job descriptions. Re-

### Course Topics Experts Demand

- training in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and in the classification of language course offers
- training in using simple language tests in the counselling situation
- training for the professional use of interpreters in a setting of counselling
- training in advanced English (mentioned were also basic courses in Arabic, French and Spanish)
- training in using simple language of receiving country
- training in effectively using visualisation means

fecting that in many cases having just a literal translation doesn't help there was also a hint to something like a multilingual compendium delivering a common understanding of main topics in the field that facilitates communication and stimulates reflexivity on meanings.

This could also be an interesting approach for the didactics of courses with bringing participants to write their own dictionary or compendium which exactly fit their demand for frequently needed vocabulary in settings of educational, vocational and career guidance.

It was also said that knowledge about language learning processes would



help to assess which kind of language courses are right for different clients, be aware of typical obstacles in the process of learning a new language and to support and encourage clients adequately in this big challenge.

In pointing to the delicate relation between language, translation and meaning experts also saw the link between this dimension and the dimensions of culture and knowledge gap. And using interpreters in counselling communication challenges the delicate personal relation between consulter and her or his counsellor: Who is the person speaking? Who is the person to hold eye contact to? And how can counsellors see to that all differentiated information, meanings, emotional undertones, signs of reservation, cautiously growing willingness to go further into details are conveyed between both partners?

## Access to and Integration into the Labour Market

This dimension points to the core field of what educational, vocational and career guidance is all about, naming the overall topic and the *raison d'être* of its (mostly publicly funded) service. It contains four different sub-topics forming the factual level of conversation so to speak:

- laws and regulations of access to the educational and vocational system and to the labour market
- recognition of foreign qualifications
- methods of assessing clients' potential and empowerment
- supportive measures and labour market schemes

They represent a wide range in which expertise must be provided by counsellors. They can be seen presented here by a typical chronological order in the process of refugees' integration into the labour market and by that enabling them to earn their own living. That may be working in a medium term only, but still being on their way to that goal and having a realistic perspective on success in that matter is crucial for preserving people's human dignity. And even if the order might be seen as a chronological one, most of the questions dealt with on this field requires the combination of expertise in more than one if not all four sub-dimensions. The first two of four directly perceptible are target group specific. The latter two show specific challenges and demands when provided for refugee clients.





## *Laws and Regulations of Access*

Laws and regulations of access to both the right of residence and the right to enter vocational training and the labour market have changed a lot in recent years and will probably underlie further frequent change. As labour market conditions, especially numbers of underemployment, changed and differed between European countries, demographic change gained more and more awareness and numbers of migration, especially forced migration, rose following crises in and around Europe administrations throughout Europe try to retain their sovereignty over the change in their populations by readjusting the legal system of rights to access by with rising frequency.

Notwithstanding reliable assessment of who coming from where has which right to what is an indispensable base on which only further consideration can be discussed. Experts therefore demand for a frequent update of their knowledge of this subjects. No course for counsellors of refugees should do without at least ensuring that all participants know about the current scheme of regulations and which doors not explicitly intended to be open still are.

Referring to this dimension experts described their self-concept as counsellors of actors who are to facilitate access to education and work. With regard to the split competences and variety of (legal and administrative as well as non-governmental) actors and stakeholders in this field it was also pled to strengthening the idea of networking between services and associations that can offer opportunities for or contacts to employment. (There are also regulations that make residential rights subject to being employed.) Networking methods may also be an important course content because it was stated that counsellors are to acknowledge the boundaries of their own expertise in their desire to be useful and helpful – and therefore should effectively make use of other experts in a common network.

## *Recognition of foreign Qualifications*

The recognition of (informal, general, vocational and academic) qualifications clients who were forced to leave their home country proved to command is a very complex matter and topic. It starts with the question whether clients were able to take along reports and certifying documents on their arduous journey, whether they were able to keep hold of them and, if not, what can be done to retrieve them while staying in the receiving country.

Then there is the question of formal recognition. Certifying systems are a very complex structure in themselves and there are numerous different ways and institutions for applying for recognition. Enabling clients to take one of these ways in most cases implies that the type of qualification or even the learnt profession could be “translated” into the



## Course Topics Experts Demand

- overview on the system of rights of access to residency, education, vocational training, labour market and social measures recently updated
- deeper view on processes of main regulations of access
- access to (highly) regulated professions
- methods of easy access to corresponding information during counselling sessions
- networking with partner institutions of counselling for refugees
- intensive training in processes and typical outcomes of recognising qualifications from abroad
- (innovative) methods of detecting educational and employability resources in clients
- narrative methods (to bridge culture-specific gaps)
- dealing with discrepancies between client's self and external assessment
- target-group specific design of supportive measures
- promoting communication with employers on behalf of refugee clients
- reflection of counsellors role and task from advocacy to enabling and empowerment

occupational system of the receiving country. These tasks require a combination of legal expertise and expertise in vocational issues. In many cases the profession applicants decide to refer to determines which the one of numerous institutions to apply to is. And if a formal decision concludes that a certain percentage of recognition can be gained counsellors should know about ways to acquire the remaining part, i.e., by attending courses that can bridge the gap.

And in the end there is the question of "recognition in the market", meaning that formal recognition is one step but employer's trust in the value of a candidate's certificate and qualification is the keystone to a refugee's door into the labour market – which brings counsellors to the demand of knowing about specific strategies and arguments to convince employers.

Regarding these challenges experts voted for getting a deeper knowledge of laws and recognition procedures and – again – knowledge about educational systems in the countries of origin. There was also demand for training in how to recognize and validate documents and declarations brought from countries of refugees' origin. Then there was raised the question of how to support clients in their difficult decision whether to retain their former occupational choice or to start a new professional education and career in the receiving country.



## *Methods of Assessing Clients' Potential and Empowerment*

The assessment of clients' potential on the labour market i.e. recognizing their formal qualifications but also detecting informal skills and their capacity for new educational ways in Europe including further education that fits previous qualifications is specifically challenging with clients being socialised in a different culture area and having no or little access to the new language and with methods of testing and assessing that are strongly language-based and culturally specific. Innovation here is urgently needed but as it seems at a very early stage in process. That is why counsellors in this task are forced to be creative because they and their clients face the danger of substantial potential staying undiscovered.

Topics to be addressed experts named here were the use of narrative methods, the use of not language based methods, self-reflection on (remaining) mechanisms and effects of the well-established deficit perspective on others, but also dealing with discrepancies between client's self and external assessment in a way that is encouraging and empowering.

## *Supportive Measures and Labour Market Schemes*

Whereas in all states with elaborated social security system there are specific measures for the integration of unemployed people (back) into the labour market, most of them – at the time of the beginning rise of forced migration to Europe from the year 2015 on – were addressed to clients with longer biographical phases in the country, even with a considerable part of persons concerned having a migrant background. When measures are to be effectively addressed to the new arrived after forced migration they have to take into account the specific needs arising from language gap and qualification mismatch mentioned above. This has an impact on content as well as on language, form and didactics. Counsellors therefore have to provide knowledge about a rapidly changing portfolio of measures and schemes adjusted to refugees' demands by supporting agencies and organisations. They must know what is available, what are the specifics and advantages of such new measures and if none of them seem to match the needs of their clients they are to send impulses into the system to provide a new adjusted item. The opportunities here strongly depend on the system of laws and regulations of access not only – as being mentioned above – to residence, education or the labour market but to social measures themselves.



## Trauma and Discrimination

Having undergone traumatic events is a widespread experience in refugee populations. This vital threat surely affects every single aspect of counselling. At first there is the problem to realise that a client carries this load everywhere in her or his life. The subject is a delicate one and the chance to get notice of it in counselling communication is reduced by several parameters, namely language barrier, lack of trust in an official interlocutor, shame, fear of flashback, suppressing emotions, wish to separate it from thoughts and plans for one's own future and more. On the other hand it should be crucial for a counsellor to know about this "elephant in the room" that can change the

decoding of so many speech and other communication acts of the client.

Counsellors very often disclosed that they feel overstrained and are unable to cope with that situation. Not having command over trauma therapist's knowledge nor skills what are the right words when the elephant became visible? How to distinguish between traumatisation that doesn't allow a client to concentrate on talk about her or his future or even effectively take steps on the way into it, and those where clients are feeling grateful and are eager to take steps away from what caused their injury? And which are professions that can be put as

### Course Topics Experts Demand

- basics of traumatising structures in countries of origin and during forced migration
- overview on types of trauma and traumatising processes
- national and international law regarding discrimination
- impact on discriminating and traumatising experiences on the counselling communication
- sensitivity and means of interpretation for signals of trauma
- dealing with traumatised clients, esp.
  - preventive avoidance of re-traumatisation
  - methods of empowering for traumatised clients
  - adequate means of (intercultural) communication and support
- network partners (e.g. therapeutic system) in support for traumatised clients
- dealing with counsellor's own feeling of powerlessness
- preventive avoidance of secondary trauma of counsellors

an achievable and harmless goal and which are not? As long as consultants with experiences like that come to get CGC and since some of them may be seen as employable



at least in medium-term, counsellors have to get training to cope with a very challenging situation that with non-refugee consultants they may never have experienced.

Consequently counsellors named a variety of knowledge and skills enabling them to care for their clients and themselves (see box). There are also some cross-overs in this section with aspects raised under other categories. A reflexive counsellor will need to have a critical understanding that there are global and historical politics that lead to discrimination and traumatising. Discrimination and trauma have an impact on counselling communication as well as on aspiration, mental health and career progression of refugees having arrived in safe haven but still carrying heavily with what they have gone through. Practitioners in counselling on the other hand need to know the limits of their expertise and who to refer on to – the latter being with the client’s permission.

*“They have to face the many challenges, discriminations and traumatic experiences that the condition of migrant and refugees involves.”*



## Additional Notes

Experts were given the opportunity to

name other needs and topics they wish to be works on in training courses preparing them for the work with refugees but were not mentioned in the eight categories given

### Course Topics Experts Demand

- knowledge to distinguish cultural, social and psychological components of clients' behaviour
- self-reflection on counsellor's own cultural identity
- dealing with clients who lost their future perspective and don't know how to go on
- laying theoretical foundations (e.g. theories of Life Design and Inclusion Models)
- methods for coaching and mediation
- knowledge of cultural anthropology
- reflecting our language to speak about migration
- family impact on occupational choice
- advanced models and approaches to disability
- special knowledge for counselling and supporting unaccompanied refugee minors
- examples about overcoming unregistered employment and unsecured work
- involve refugees in courses giving case impressions of supporting means
- tools for self-evaluation of counselling processes
- supervision methods
- self-confidence training for counsellors

in our questionnaire. Answers in this category on the one could have mostly been subsumed under one of the given categories. The fact that especially topics of critical self-reflection and intercultural competence are found in the additional notes point to two aspects: first the importance of these points that are very close to the personality and attitude to life and human society of the counsellor her- or himself. Secondly what experts hint at here is that the named topics and competences somehow build the frame for the new challenge and they make clear how interdependently entangled all single tasks and topics of our eight categories are and that effects in counselling targeted at in one of those dimensions highly depend on the performance in the others.

The open category was also used to make suggestions on didactics



## Conclusion and Discussion

Being aware that counselling in matters of education, vocational choice and employment career design is a very complex task and thus results in a number and variety of challenges no matter what social group clients may belong to, our findings in our Delphi survey have clearly shown that counselling refugee clients is even more challenging. The task of CGC counsellors is to “provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions” (ELGPN 2012: 21). Doing that successfully for clients who were forced to leave their home, having experienced a very rough and not seldom life-endangering journey to Europe, trying now to settle in the receiving country with its language and culture different from theirs and foreign to them requires a lot of additional and specific knowledge and skills of counsellors for refugees. These demands of extra knowledge and skill can be identified on every single level of the counselling profession: the factual level, the communication skills and the professional self-reflection and self-concept.

Corresponding course contents should easily be enough to fill the curriculum for a post-graduate master programme – which to develop in the near future we highly recommend. A preliminary résumé of curriculum desiderata could sum up six dimensions of content (not in order of priority):

1. Understanding of the context why and how people (are forced to) migrate – political, sociological and psychological determinants and effects on refugees’ lives
2. Barriers and support for the integration and inclusion of refugees in European receiving countries’ societies – legal, political and social framework conditions
3. Access to education and labour market for refugees – legal, political and social framework conditions
4. Language and multicultural communication with consultants of non-European culture areas and with foreign mother tongues
5. Managing transition, using and moving beyond supporting measures – from advocacy to empowerment for refugees
6. Critical reflection of role and self-concept as counsellor, methods of evaluation and supervision

Such a programme surely cannot be satisfyingly complied with in piloting courses as being projected within the resources of the CMinaR project. We will therefore concentrate on basic information and first and foremost on sensitising participants to the dimensions of their new counselling task and the needs (and some means) for further learning processes.



## Appendix and References

CCCU (2017)

CMinaR IO2 UK Report Phase 1 (28th April 2017), Collation of Qualitative Questionnaires/Interviews from Experts. Canterbury Christ Church University

ELGPN (2012),

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, *Lifelong Guidance Policy Development: A European Resource Kit*. Jyväskylä, Finland

Ferrari et al- (2017)

Ferrari Lea, Teresa M. Sgaramella, Ilaria Di Maggio and Laura Nota. On Refugees Needs: Italian Report from the Qualitative Questionnaire. National Italian Report on CMinar-IO2, University of Padova

ITÜ (2017)

CMinaR Intellectual Output 2. Needs Analysis. Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi

Kohn (2011)

Karl-Heinz P. Kohn. *Migrationsspezifische beschäftigungsorientierte Beratung – spezifische Themen, spezifische Bedarfe. Ergebnisse einer Delphi-Breitband-Erhebung*. Berlin [www.Kohnpage.de/Text2011a.pdf](http://www.Kohnpage.de/Text2011a.pdf)

Kohn (2017)

Karl-Heinz P. Kohn. Specific career counselling for refugees - the key to tapping a significant potential of skilled workers. English translation of article: Spezifische Berufsberatung für geflüchtete Menschen - Schlüssel zur Nutzung eines bedeutenden Fachkräftepotenzials. in: Carsten Kreklau / Josef Siegers (Hrsg.): *Handbuch der Aus- und Weiterbildung. Politik, Praxis, Finanzielle Förderung*, Köln, Loseblattwerke Deutscher Wirtschaftsdienst, Beitrag 3313, Aktualisierungslieferung Nr. 285  
[www.Kohnpage.de/Text2017b.pdf](http://www.Kohnpage.de/Text2017b.pdf)

Sundelin (2017)

Åsa Sundelin. CMinaR IO2. Sweden Final report, June 2017. Collation of Qualitative Questionnaires/Interviews from Experts. Department of Education, Stockholm University

