

# People who serve as development workers should not be at a disadvantage in their working lives

## 50 years of the Reintegration Programme for returning professionals

When the first development workers returned from abroad at the end of the 1960s, many of them had difficulty getting back into the rather inflexible German job market. In response to this, the development service agencies established the Reintegration Programme, which began offering counselling in 1968 to those considering further training or education. The Reintegration Programme also awarded scholarships for participation in further education and training courses, and created a programme of seminars tailored to the needs of returning professionals. Provision was made for these support measures in the Development Workers Act (§12). And, from 1970 onwards, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation provided financial support. In 1972 already as many as 357 returnees took advantage of what was on offer. The Reintegration Programme is still their central point of contact today.

To begin with, the jobs which people had originally trained for still determined which career paths were open to them. The "Information on Education and Training for German Professionals Abroad" (1982 to 1984), which was compiled by the Reintegration Programme, brought together information relating to trades, teaching, or medicine. Anyone who had a query for the Reintegration Programme sometimes had to wait for weeks, however, until an answer came by post to their (temporary) home overseas. A personal consultation was not possible until they returned to Germany. Anyone who was willing to do further training after completing their service could apply for receive a scholarship to cover at least part of their costs. For several decades, the financial support, which was aligned with the BAföG (state-funded student grants), was substantial. "Career prospects" was also one of the key topics covered during the seminars. A lot of returnees wondered how they could present their experience of working in

development service as evidence of having acquired new skills and how they could apply what they had learned in their work in Germany. These are still key questions in our work in the Reintegration Programme, even now.

### INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION

The broader context has changed, though: The job market no longer works as it used to with the focus on clearly defined trades and professions. New fields of work are coming into existence and some of them include areas which are ideal for returnees in particular to move into (e.g. climate protection and international social work). And development cooperation has itself become established as a distinct economic sector which needs experienced professionals.

Another significant change is the trend towards life-long learning: Further education and skills training have become an integral part of most people's CVs and there are now so many different training courses on offer that it is virtually impossible to see the overall picture. Information collected and compiled by the Reintegration Programme serves as useful orientation. Online, we offer tips on looking for and applying for jobs and also numerous transfer articles, in which returnees recount their experiences. Experts explain about the hidden job market, what to pay attention to when applying for jobs with international organisations, and e-recruiting – current trends, which professionals living abroad may well not be aware of.

### ONLINE COUNSELLING AND WEBINARS

Nowadays digital channels of communication make it possible to provide counselling or advice over long distances and in real time. And professionals can prepare

#### 50 years of the Reintegration Programme in numbers:

- 14,596 advice-giving/counselling sessions
- 7,930 seminar participants
- 1,346 grants or loans for training

#### The Reintegration Programme has been under the wing of the following organisations:

- from 1969: the Karl Kübel Foundation
- from 1987: AKLHU e.V. (on an interim basis)
- from 1988 Carl Duisburg Centren gGmbH
- since 2002: AGdD e.V.

for their return at an earlier stage and more efficiently. Our counsellors use a variety of (on-line) coaching methods. During seminars returnees meet speakers who have themselves undertaken development service. The ensuing dialogue makes it possible for returnees to obtain a realistic insight into how things work in this particular sector. And the dialogue also facilitates networking among participants. The focus is on new fields of work such as migration/integration and “green” jobs. Webinars have been added to the seminar programme since 2017.

In 2019 the “ProfilPASS Entwicklungsdienst/Ziviler Friedensdienst” (“Development service/Civil Peace Service ProfilePASS”) was published jointly by the AGdD and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE). The ProfilePASS facilitates the assessment of skills/competencies and is used in counselling. Returnees can use

the results to work out a personal strategy for making a successful job application or planning their career. The work of the Reintegration Programme continues to be dynamic and hugely exciting. Although there is now much less financial support for training, our expertise is very much in demand and there are always new challenges.

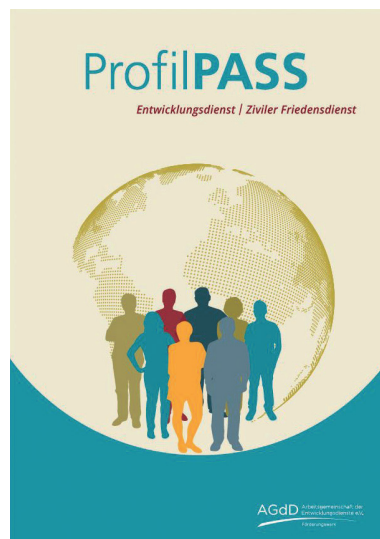
We are currently addressing the following topics:

- mental health during and after development service
- returning to other European countries and integration into their respective job markets
- counselling for older returnees

In all that we do, we are especially keen to facilitate direct exchange and encounter with (former) development workers – and this is something which we enjoy immensely.



2017, 163 Pages  
[www.agdd.de/studie-2017](http://www.agdd.de/studie-2017)



2019, 76 Pages  
[www.agdd.de/profilpass](http://www.agdd.de/profilpass)