



STRENGTHS ATLAS



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Gefördert durch

Im Auftrag des

This product is being created in the framework of the "Weiterbildung für Rückkehrer/innen" ("Further training for returnees") project run by Deutsche Volkshochschul-Verbands e.V.



Deutscher
Volkshochschul-Verband

STRENGTHS ATLAS

Skills identification – further training for returnees

Introduction

There has always been migration into other countries, and even other continents: uncertain living situations, civil wars, a lack of work opportunities, insufficient healthcare, and the consequences of climate change may lead people to leave their homes. Migration to Germany is not new either, but increased immigration over recent years represents a particular challenge for the federal government and local authorities.

Many refugees expected a better future in Germany. These expectations remain unfulfilled in many cases, and some refugees have already returned to their countries of origin. In 2017 a total of 30,000 people made an application for voluntary return; in the first quarter of 2018 alone, 40,000 people applied. The federal government would like to tackle the causes of flight in the countries of origin, and open up future perspectives for people in their country of origin. Refugees should be prepared for return to the best possible extent while still in Germany. As such, the global *Migration und Entwicklung* [Migration and Development] project run by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [German Association for International Collaboration] encompasses projects implemented in Germany, offering support before return, and is also why structures are being established in countries of origin to offer the returnee an anchor point and initial orientation in their home country. These measures are financed by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.

The Weiterbildung für Rückkehrer/innen project run by Deutsche Volkshochschul-Verbands e.V. falls within the measures supporting improved preparation for return. Further training is offered at ten adult education centres in Germany.

The low-threshold courses offered are modular in structure. The flat progression structure means they can be started on a week-to-week basis. The various training modules – sewing, tailoring and handcraft, for example – are conducted in tandem with lecturers and teaching assistants. Because a decision to return is not an easy one for most returnees to make, coaches are available throughout the period of training to offer psychosocial support.

At the beginning of training, the Strengths Atlas identification of skills presented here is performed with each participant during an advice session. The purpose of this instrument is to give participants the opportunity to research their strengths and document their skills.

The individual training modules develop from the findings in the identification of skills, as well as the needs of the labour market in the respective individual's country of origin. All offers are implemented as partial qualification modules, and the participant receives a corresponding certificate after completing the training.

The contextual conditions result in particular challenges for the skills identification advisors: participants have very diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistic capabilities, and will be returning into very diverse worlds of work and societal structures in their countries of origin. With this in mind, the present instrument offers culturally sensitive materials which focus on each individual's resources. The Strengths Atlas is currently being used in pilot form; as soon as initial experience has been gathered, it will be adapted to the needs of the advisors.

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STRENGTHS ATLAS objectives and approaches

The identification of skills in the context of advice on return is subject to a few complex challenges. Their origins, culture, language, level of education, and formally and informally acquired (professional) qualifications, mean that the individuals receiving advice constitute a very heterogeneous group. Although this is also true of the traditional integration course, the courses for returnees have the aim not of facilitating integration into the system of the majority society, but of providing the best possible preparation for conditions in the country of origin. Both the requirements of the local labour markets and the societal structures and acceptance that returnees can expect in the society they are returning to vary greatly. Unlike the majority of instruments that have been developed over recent years to improve integration in the German context (societal and professional), these specific considerations are important in the provision of advice here. In turn, this means that the trained specialist must be familiar with the demands of the countries of origin, and takes these into account.

The Strengths Atlas focuses on a holistic, resource-oriented view of the individual. The primary goal is to determine individual skills, abilities, potentials, taking into account cultural aspects and gender-specific preferences. The identification of skills should provide the individual receiving advice with perspective and a guide for the near and distant future, and through reflection on their own strengths give them a visualisation of their own resources and therefore a clearer self-image. Each participant brings their own history and therefore skills that have been acquired in their personal or professional environment.

In the process of creating the instrument, its cultural sensitivity has been reviewed by representatives of cooperating further training institutions based outside Germany. In addition, the instrument is a working document that is adapted on an ongoing basis and updated to country- and culture-specific needs. In creating the Strengths Atlas, already-existing instruments for the identification of skills were analysed with a focus on migration and flight. In addition, specialist conversations were held with various civil society organisations, providers of further training, associations and advice centres in order to gain an understanding of the methods used and proven there. In this process, it became clear that there is no concept and no material that can be used for every individual to be advised. Instead, practitioners prefer to use a combination of different instruments. This means that the extremely diverse requirements are taken into account, and university graduates and people without school experience alike can be tested; the instruments developed to date have often been aligned at just one particular target group. The Strengths Atlas is set to a low threshold, in order to reach all individuals receiving advice. Individual and varied parts of the identification of skills can be worked on depending on the requirements of the individual receiving advice. The individual receiving advice is free to omit sections if they do not seem useful. The same applies to the use of materials. The time specification is used as orientation for the identification of skills in the context of individual advice. Using the instrument with groups, as well as on a one-to-one basis for a longer period of time is always possible and in fact desirable.

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Basic information

The Strengths Atlas is:

 intended for individual and collective identification of skills.

 takes around 120 minutes when advising individually / can be extended as required for groups.

Requirements for the Strengths Atlas advisor

The following principles must always be complied with:



Confidentiality



Equity



Subjectivity/impartiality



Clarity



Privacy

- A culturally sensitive attitude and interacting on an equal footing are particularly important.
- The advisor must be sensitive to migration histories, learning cultures and life situations of individuals with a migration background, and have a high degree of ambiguity tolerance.
- The advisor must be committed to confidentiality and loyalty, and should make the participant feel that they are in a protected and safe environment.
- The objectives, processes and possible uses for the identification of skills must be clear to participants from the outset.
- Participation in the identification of skills is always voluntary, with no results bias.
- The identification of skills is used to ascertain the individual's strengths and to support the individual. In the advisory process, the individual receiving advice should not develop the expectation that they will definitely have a job after returning to the country of origin.
- The purpose of the advice is to initiate a process enabling the individual receiving advice to be resource-focused and to visualise their strengths. The central theme – of being able to develop a strategy for the future at the end of the identification of skills – should be developed in the advisory process.

The linguistic capabilities of the individual receiving advice present a particular challenge to a successful advising process. The advisor should observe the following points in this respect.

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Language

- If the individual has a low level of linguistic capability, the speed of speech and vocabulary choices must be adapted.
- An advisor should always ensure that he or she has understood correctly and been correctly understood.
- The advisor must be sensitive to the fact that the views and understanding of the advisor do not correspond to the views and understanding of the individual receiving advice.
- In addition, regular reflection on the advisor's own role is strongly advised in order to avoid derogatory behaviour towards the participant. German language skills have nothing to do with intelligence.

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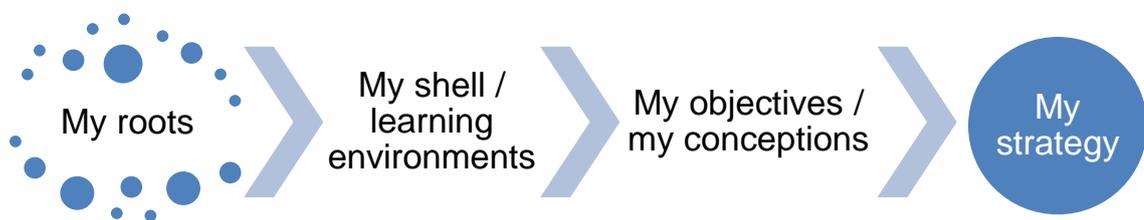
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Structure of the STRENGTHS ATLAS



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My STRENGTHS ATLAS

Name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Core areas of the STRENGTHS ATLAS



My roots (approx. 30 minutes)

Who am I?

Where do I come from and where was I born? Suggestions for implementation: Please draw a mind map (sociogram/flower meadow/tree) with the participant in the centre, and during the advice session fill out the personality and relationship map.

My own family Please draw the individuals into the mind map (sociogram/flower meadow/tree). The participant is in the centre. Work on the personality and relationship map in parallel.

Who is part of my family? Who is my wife/husband? How many children do I have?

Who else do I look after?

Who are my friends? Where are they?

Stations in my life (Use the flower meadow worksheet and set out the individual stations here. Write the locations and people as well as the areas of employment that the participant links into the flowers)

Where have I lived? (Village, small town, city)

What did I do there? (School, work, free time)

Role models

Among my family and friends, which individuals have been/are important in my life?
(Records the most important characteristics of the participant's role model; what ideals/aspirations does the participant have? What characteristics are important to him/her? What does he/she strive for?)

Why?

Values

What's important to me in life? (Additional sheet: personal values)

In family; with friends; for work?

What do I particularly support?

Language

What is/are my first language(s)? How well can I read and write in my first language(s)? (If appropriate, use the language learning biography worksheet here)

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What other languages do I speak? How well can I speak, understand and write in these languages?

First language

gut mittel geringe Kenntnisse

Additional languages:

Language:

High level Medium level Low level of knowledge

Language:

High level Medium level Low level of knowledge

Language:

High level Medium level Low level of knowledge

Language:

High level Medium level Low level of knowledge

My personal contacts

Am I still in touch with friends, relatives or other people in my country of origin? What form does this contact take (phone, email, letters, Skype)?

Can/will I use these contacts after I return?



My shell / learning environments (45 minutes)

Social life

What particular tasks have I had in my family, in Germany or in my country of origin?

In the local area?

In (cultural) associations?

In the faith community?

Household

What household experience do I have, including cooking/baking?

What do I like to cook and who for?

What other household activities have I done?

Caring for older people and children

Have I ever looked after children?

Do I enjoy looking after children?

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What do I like to do with children? (For example, playing, reading to them, sport, singing, dancing, being outdoors, learning)

Have I looked after older people or people who are ill?

Do I enjoy looking after older people or people who are ill?

Medical expertise

What medical expertise do I offer?

Handicraft

Do have experience with handicraft? If yes, what crafts exactly? (sewing/tailoring, woodwork, car and bicycle repair, repairing electrical equipment (TVs and radios), weaving, welding, carpentry, construction work)

Can I renovate my home? Painting walls and sanding and painting doors?

Agriculture

Have I worked in the fields or garden? Do I have experience with animals? What exactly have I done?

Agriculture	Where	Activities
With animals		
In the fields		
In the garden		

Creativity

Am I creative?

Do I enjoy creating new things and thinking outside the box?

Can I paint, dance, sing, or play an instrument, or do I enjoy acting or doing sport?

Can I style hair and make-up?

Intercultural skills

What have I noticed/learned in different countries and being in contact with individuals from other cultures? For example, norms, ways of interacting, manners, customs, lifestyles?

What did I like and what was I less keen on? And why? How did I deal with this?

School / work / practical experience¹

What schools did I attend in my country of origin and in Germany?

School	From ... to	Degrees / school certificates

What profession have I learned? / What education I completed? What activities I performed?

Job/training/activity	From ... to	Degrees/certificates

¹ It's possible to link into previously identified learning environments here. This is particularly useful for individuals receiving advice who come from countries of origin with more informally organised labour markets where there is no professional training in the traditional form.

Professional and activity-specific experience

What professional experience do I have? Where have I worked? Who have I learned things from?

In what ways have I helped my family or friends? (In the business, agriculture, or household) – please provide as precise a description as possible of the activities

Job	From ... to	Activities

What else have I learned? What courses have I attended (language courses, PC courses, drivers license, handicraft courses)

Courses/further training	From ... to	Activities

What did I like best in my activities/training? What was I most interested in? What was difficult for me?



My objectives and conceptions (15 minutes)

What are my desires and goals?

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MY STRATEGY (approx. 30 minutes)

How can I use my skills and experience?

SWOT analysis?

What area do I want to work in after my return?

Do my skills fit my vision of the future? What do I still need to develop? What do I still need to work on?

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What opportunities are there for me to continue training?

Who can I get support from? (Family, friends, acquaintances?)

What do I need to do to achieve my goals? What difficulties may arise? SMART
(specific, measurable, accepted, reasonable, time-bound)

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