

ALLIANCE AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

“An Agenda for Prevention: Non-Discrimination and Empowerment” (11-12 October 2012)

Roundtable Discussion: Non-Discrimination and Empowerment as a Prevention Strategy

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Facts: Introduction to KVINFOs Mentor Network

About the Mentor Network

KVINFO's Mentor Network is a programme that pairs up refugee and immigrant women with women who are firmly established members of the Danish workforce. We call the immigrant woman mentee. Mentees are women with great potential. But they lack professional and social networks! It has been estimated that more than 50 % of all job openings in Denmark are filled via personal networks. Networks are essential to gain a foothold in Danish society.

Taking the needs and wishes of the individual into account, this way the programme opens doors for these women and helps them become better acquainted with all aspects of Danish society. This way we open new doors for immigrant women living in Denmark. Doors to the labor market, doors to the educational system and doors to society as a whole.

On the other hand the mentors are women who would like provide advice regarding job applications, job interviews, workplace culture, reassessment of employment potential. They are also willing to open up their networks.

The Basic Concept

The mentoring relationship provides the opportunity for one-on-one meetings between mentee and mentor in which both parties are treated as equals. Mentor and mentee are paired up according to the mentee's educational and professional background and her personal wishes and goals. Built upon mutual respect and trust, the aim of the relationship is to then assist the mentee in fully realizing her potential, in turn enabling her to progress successfully with her life in Denmark.

We take it as a given that the mentee who volunteers to work with a mentor genuinely wants to become part of the unified community. Also we expect that the Danish mentors are willing to open up their networks. Every day we see that they work to create the necessary trust that leads to positive new connections.

A Network of values

The Mentor Network is based on a set of three values...

1. Focus on the positive perspective

The strength of the Mentor Network lies in the fact that it is a one-to-one relationship. There is no

package solution. The mentee define her own needs as individual. She sets the agenda. In the daily encounter between Danish mentors. Since they share an education or a profession there is a platform for dialogue and it becomes easier to look for the door that leads to the dream becoming reality.

2. Focus on equality

And ‘equality’ is also the cornerstone of the entire mentoring relationship; the core principle being that what we have in common with one another is greater than that which divides us.

In our model mentor and mentee are equal, and equality provides a platform for dialogue and collaboration, which is to the benefit of mentee and mentor alike.

3. Focus on the individual

It is not a question of where a mentee comes from, what she believes, the food she eats or the clothes she wears. For us it is solely a case of how we can support her in realising the dream of a good life in Denmark.

Size of the Network

The first office in the Mentor Network was established by KVINFO in Copenhagen in 2002 and the other office is placed in Fyn – a part of Denmark as well.

Since 2002 the network has involved more than 7000 participants. 2600 women with firm establishment in the Danish workforce have functioned as mentors and 3500 women from over 140 different countries have signed up as mentees. Today 378 mentor couples are matched in well-functioning relationships. Looking at the backgrounds of the mentees the 10 highest represented countries are Iraq, Russia, Iran, Poland, China, Turkey, Somalia, Brazil, Ukraine and Pakistan.

How Is the Network Financed?

The Mentor Network is financed by The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs.

An Inspirational Network

KVINFO’s Mentor Network has inspired the establishment of similar networks in other sectors in Denmark, and the idea has even transcended the country’s borders. Several different countries have set up similar initiatives inspired by KVINFO. And in 2007, the OECD also published a report documenting measures of integration within the European countries. The report highlighted KVINFO’s Mentor Network as one of the most positive initiatives within the field of integration in Denmark.

What is KVINFO?

The Mentor Network is a concept developed by KVINFO – the Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender. KVINFO is a grant-maintained, self-governing institution under The Ministry of Culture. KVINFO’s main services consist of a research library, a web magazine, a free online encyclopaedia, a database of female professionals as well as a substantial website which boasts over 500.000 visitors per year.