

Podcast interview with Robin Vikaune Ciovina

Project manager in the FETI-project

Interviewer: I am sitting here today with Robin, who is the project manager in the FETI-project along with me Kristine Andersen. And Robin, can you start of telling me a bit about how did you find out about the FETI-project?

Robin: Yes, you (Kristine Andersen) and me we were given the responsibility for the FETI project after Helene Fredriksen left in the summer of 2021. I will say that it was both exciting and scary to take on the responsibility for such a large project that involved international cooperation in the field of career guidance, but I did not hesitate when I was asked and I thanked yes to that, of course

Interviewer: And I am glad to hear that. Can you tell me a bit about where do you work, what do you do and a bit about your background?

Robin: Yes, I can. I come from a small village outside Oslo, Norway. I work at Karriere Oslo where I have worked since January 2021. However, I have worked in the field of integration for 12 years, of which the last nine years before I started my career here in Karriere Oslo I worked with the integration of refugees in the public employment office, that we call NAV here in Norway. I have been working in different NAV offices in various parts of the country.

Interviewer: So, Robin do you have any specific training, when it comes to immigrants and refugees?

Robin: First of all, I am a trained pedagogue and i have further education in guidance within the labor and welfare administration here in Norway. In addition to that, I am now working on completing my master's degree in career guidance. At the same time as I work full time with career guidance for refugees here at Karriere Oslo and I hold the project management together with Kristine Andersen for the FETI-project as well.

Interviewer: How do you first engage with the target audience?

Robin: Well, in the first meetings with the participants that we guide here at the office, it is important for me to have a listening attitude towards them. It is important for me to be able to put myself in the other person's shoes, and to understand how career learning, the way that people make choices, is integrated into the lives that they have lived in the past. I often get this out by listening to the refugees life story. There is a lot that can come up here, and many tell of great difficulties and struggles throughout their lives. It is also important in this work to confirm competence through their storytelling as they can give them confidence and drive for their new life here in Norway. It is also important for me through the guidance make clear that injustices in their lives are not an integral part of themselves, and are something about context and coincidences, most often.

Interviewer: What are the most difficult and / or most rewarding aspects of your work with refugees or immigrants?

Robin: The most rewarding thing is when I experience that people walk out of the guidance room with a smile on their face, and that they experience that they have gained new insight

into themselves and their possibilities in Norway. I must say it also gives me courage when I see that people who apparently lacked faith in themselves have gained new self-confidence when I meet them again after a few months. It is an important principle for me that lack of motivation is not a static property, but something that can be worked on and can be turned around. Although this presents great challenges for us career counselors. In many cases, this is about giving people time and the opportunity to feel mastered and to be confirmed on this. This becomes especially important for refugees and immigrants who do not have formal schooling or work experience.

Interviewer: What are the tools and activities that you normally use in the initial stages of knowledge and orientation with the target group?

Robin: When working with refugees at our office, we use a lot of narrative guidance in the career guidance that we provide. We use previous experience, that many find liberating to talk about, and we can connect it with the context they have lived before and their future desires. Concretely we also make a lot of use of a tool called VIP24, which is an image-based career tool based on John Holland's RIASEC system. We have also tried My world of work which is a Scottish tool, with great results.

Interviewer: To my final question today, what difference has engagement with the FETI Project experience made to your approaches to this work?

Robin: Well, first of all I must say that the FETI-project has given us a lot of insight into other countries' practice of working with refugees and migrants. We come from very different cultures even though we all are under the umbrella of Europe, and we work with refugees in vastly different contexts. This has meant that there had been some challenges related to what is transferable between the countries. However, in particular our work with I04 has shown us through system theoretical thinking that there are several things that coincide between the different countries when we work towards social cohesion. We see that the importance of intercultural competence, the importance of local cooperation, long-term thinking, but also the focus on political barriers to integration seem to coincide between the different countries.

Interviewer: Thank you Robin, for joining us today