

Success Story of CONVOY WORLD



1. Company profile

Convoy world is a manufacturing company situated in a suburb near the Bulgarian capital city Sofia. In the last couple of years, the company is developing very fast, expanding on new markets in the EU, which increased their personnel needs, in particular in the production facilities. This was one of the drivers for the management to enhance the scope of their potential candidates, giving chance to people from different socially or economically disadvantaged groups, especially for the positions requiring low-skilled labour.

2. Previous experience with refugees

In this context the management of the company also came up with the idea to attract refugees from the three centers in Sofia and requested more information from the State Agency for refugees how to proceed. As they did not get enough practical information how to proceed, they decided to search some support from the Career Center at Caritas Sofia, which are very active in the job matching process of refugees in Bulgaria. Thanks to their efforts, they managed to make some a very successful hiring of a refugee from Iran, because the man was very skilled in the particular operation (of metal cutting machines) which compensated a bit the fact that he did not speak Bulgarian so well. After few months, he managed to meet and even exceed the management expectations, becoming one of the best employees and role model for the other employees. Despite the fact that the employee did not get a positive decision about his refugee status, and had to leave the country, the management of the company had a very positive experience and decided to continue their efforts in this direction.

3. COME IN approach

They hired few more refugees mainly from Iraq and Afghanistan and not only from the centers in Sofia but also in Harmanli. The first contact to CATRO was mainly after the job fair with refugees, after which the COME IN approach was presented to the management and they requested CATRO counseling and coaching services in relation to the national programs for subsidized employment. Furthermore, they took part in the COME IN workshop dedicated to topics like competence validation and diversity management at work to share their experience with other companies willing to hire refugees which was very valuable for all of them.

4. Refugees' integration

In the beginning the main goal of the company CONVOY world was to hire refugees in order to meet their rising demand for personnel in the manufacturing. However, after the first successful hiring of the refugee from Iran and especially after getting to know their personal stories, they decided to invest more efforts in this direction and hired more than 10 refugees in the last 5 years. Starting step by step, the management actually developed a holistic integration approach, which was also supported by the other employees in the company. They invested own resources (in the form of dedicated time and money) in the vocational and language training of the refugees, through establishing fruitful cooperation with NGOs like Caritas Sofia and the Refugee Integration and Information Center at the Bulgarian red Cross.

Currently, the company also offers support for relocation (especially for the refugees in Harmanli which is almost 300 km away from the manufacturing site of the company) in the form of housing provision against reduced rent, transport costs, food and a flexible working time. Moreover, the management has helped alone standing women refugees to enroll their children in the local school and to support health insurance provision for all family members.

The other employees in the company did also provide some support in the form of providing clothing and other necessary goods for appropriate living which happened in a natural way without any request from the Management.

The main success factors in the story of CONVOY World that despite some administrative difficulties at the beginning with the State Agency for Refugees they did not give up and tried to find other ways to meet their business needs. They established successful and sustainable partnerships with NGOs as well as with companies like CATRO through which they managed not only to identify the appropriate and motivated people for their open positions, but also to share their experience with other companies, who want to go through this adventure. They shared not only the positive achievements but also the lessons learned which confirm the reality that most of the refugees coming to Bulgaria actually do not intend to stay here in the long-run, however the efforts to offer full integration support for 5-6 or more people are worth enough to continue.

