

Kompass D – At Home in the New Homeland

At the end of 2015, at the height of the so-called refugee crisis and thus almost 10 years ago, twenty entrepreneurs, together with other companies in Neuss, took the initiative and founded "Kompass D". The integration project aims to provide newly arrived "New Neussers" with a life perspective that allows them to lead a self-determined life – through integration into their new homeland, especially by enabling their own employment. As an interim conclusion, it can be noted that by July 2025, at least 550 documented New Neussers have been further qualified, making a self-determined life more likely. The learning year 2025/2026 will also bring further benefits to the general public, as more than 150 - 200 new participants are expected again.

Kompass D targets voluntarily participating school-age adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16 and 25. Through promotion and integration, as well as self-help, potentials are to be developed that improve the abilities of the young – often unaccompanied male migrants – from suitable to well-suited. For example, they are accompanied into the German training system and prepared for further qualifications as an additional offer in their new homeland.

The entrepreneurs and co-initiators sought and found a circle of donors from companies based in the Rhein-Kreis Neuss. With the goal of creating a professional basis, all companies together raised around one million euros for about three years. In addition, the city of Neuss and the Rhein-Kreis Neuss were won over, contributing their infrastructural possibilities (e.g., VHS Neuss) and their expertise free of charge and enabling solutions. Today, the Rhein-Kreis Neuss itself contributes a significant financial share to the project, and the contributions of the companies in money and volunteer time complement it.

Continuously finding and closing gaps until they are closed

From the beginning, Kompass D and its guides have responded year after year to gaps in the system that they identified themselves. This was an explicit founding wish and reason of the companies. From 2016, it was people from regions of the world unknown to us, with diverse cultural backgrounds and educational levels. From May 2022, it was then young Ukrainians who suddenly "appeared". Today, Ukrainian is as normal to hear as Arabic or other languages. In the last two years, more and more people without reading or writing skills have come to our region. Through good cooperation with the learning locations, Kompass D has been helping about 25 young people per learning year with literacy measures since 2023.

Through a newly established, unique, and confidential network called "Berliner Runde" (initiated by then-Chancellor's Office Minister Peter Altmeier and BA/BAMF Chief Jürgen Weise) with participants from administrations and schools in the Rhein-Kreis Neuss and the city of Neuss,

BAMF Düsseldorf, and the NRW Düsseldorf/Mönchengladbach Employment Agency and Jobcenter Neuss under the leadership of the district director RKN, experiences and suggestions are exchanged, gaps are identified and documented, processes are improved among each other, and problems are discussed. And: communication takes place through the own network, possibly improving the situation for the region.

The newly established Youth Employment Agency of the Rhein-Kreis Neuss has been positively contributing since 2022.

Comprehensive and targeted promotion

Organizationally, Kompass D uses existing structures of the city and district, such as all five district-affiliated vocational schools and the Neuss Adult Education Center. Full-time guides work with the young people based on a specially developed curriculum for the duration of a learning year. The goal: a real own professional perspective. In addition to improving language skills – up to the B2 level – social studies in the sense of "This is how Germany works", application training, and orientation days at the learning location and in companies are on the curriculum. Almost more important, however, is the promotion of non-subject-specific skills such as self-responsibility, recognizing and seizing opportunities, goal-oriented action, teamwork and communication skills, empathy, openness, and frustration tolerance. At the end of the learning year, the successful participants also receive an evaluation from the team as a written certificate. Often, it is the first documentation of achievement in the new environment. The certificate is well-known and valued in the region.

Up to 100 volunteers, for example from the participating companies or the public, are also involved in Kompass D every year. They all work to increase the impact and achieve the goals as comprehensively as possible.

Profession as a key to dignity and recognition

Whether native or migrant: voluntary engagement or profession opens a decisive opportunity for social participation. Contributing one's own abilities, i.e., bringing them into the community, is a significant factor in Germany for experiencing one's own worth, dignity, and self-respect. For oneself, this means nothing less than the fundamental experience of recognition and attention as an equal citizen of this country. All project participants are aware that employment means two things for the New Neussers: They earn their own living and are thus integrated into society and their new homeland more quickly. And even if people could one day return and leave, they take the positive experiences and what they have learned from Germany and Neuss back home and will apply it there.

Measurable Impact

In the previous nine learning years, more than 800 young people have participated. Of these, a total of 550 New Neussers were successfully prepared through support and received a certificate (see above). Of these, about 60 young people have started training in companies in the Rhein-Kreis Neuss. Others are now achieving a qualified secondary school diploma, and others are aiming for a secondary school diploma to then find their own way, ideally standing on their own two feet. Of course, usually in companies, like all other young people.

Evaluation

Kompass D does not rely solely on numbers but has been evaluated by an independent body. Prof. Dr. Claudia Neu from the University of Göttingen (2017 – 2020) certifies the entrepreneurial initiative:

- Local engagement: promotes labor market integration
- Building network structures: brings relevant actors together in a targeted manner
- Impact as a seismograph: challenges emerge here immediately, long before they are noticed elsewhere, as work is done with people
- High resilience: behaves agilely, learns from mistakes, faces new challenges, shows successes, and encourages.

Conclusion

Kompass D has become a "brand" in the Rhein-Kreis Neuss, and the "certificates" are recognized and valued by companies. Even without a formal German degree, young people have a chance. As a "gap finder", it has proven itself and helps official structures to improve. Solutions are offered and used for young people and companies, thus improving opportunities for earnings and training. The young people thus increase their chances of leading a self-determined life.

UNTERSTÜTZENDE UNTERNEHMER/INNEN UND UNTERNEHMEN



Kompass D - Eine Initiative für Neu-Neusser von Neusser Unternehmen

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