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Digital networking tools boost employment of highly educated immigrants

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DigiMESH-project, which ended at the end of October 2023, made a visible difference in the digital networking field in a short period of time. The outcomes of a 2-year-long collaborative project between Turku University of Applied Sciences and Tampere University of Applied Sciences will continue to exist in the form of a publicly accessible MOOC course and Networking Steps -mini game.

The primary goal of the ESF REACT-EU project was to enhance the career development of highly educated immigrants by advancing digital networking. The project systematically assessed the capability of guidance professionals to assist their clients in digital networking and strengthened their skills with the help of different tools and materials. Additionally, the project identified the recruitment needs of companies for international workers and conducted pilot initiatives involving various digital events to facilitate networking with immigrants.

MOOC and networking game as knowledge developers

One of the project's most significant outcomes is the self-learning MOOC course titled Digital Networking towards Job Market, designed to acquaint students with the realm of digital networking. The free course on the Digi Campus platform consists of five sections encompassing topics such as the significance of motivation and attitude in networking, principles of digital recruitment as well as online presence and digital footprint of job seekers.

The content of the course was developed together with experts from International House Tampere and SIMHE – Service for Immigrants in Higher Education. The otherwise English-language course includes one Finnish-language part, which discusses the importance of local language skills in networking. The MOOC was piloted at TAMK in the spring of 2023 and was completed by a total of 17 students. Among them were mainly international students living in Tampere and highly educated immigrants seeking for employment. The feedback from the course was very good.

The project also developed a mini-game test that, once completed, allows users to discover their own networking type. Steps-minigame explores seven aspects of networking through a series of mini quests. The game can be played either in Finnish or English.

Supporting materials for organizing digital events

The newly published handbook titled Getting to grips with Digital Networks provides readers with a practical introduction to the domain of networking and offers concrete tips on motivating customers and fostering a networking mindset. While the handbook is primarily targeted at guidance professionals, its content proves valuable for anyone with an interest in the subject.

Fast Track to Familiarity -method cards, on the other hand, contain various exercises and tasks that the organizer can use to promote networking and mutual interaction between event participants. The cards provide ideas for both remote and live events.

Interaction and networking can also be promoted through DigiMESH Event Models. They provide ideas for organizing online events in cooperation with companies. The models include descriptions of different event concepts, how they were implemented during the project and what proved to be the successes and stumbling blocks of each of them. Both the method cards and event models can be adapted to suit individual needs.

Although the DigiMESH-project has now come to an end, the development and learning of digital networking will continue in the future. We hope that the materials presented above will help international professionals to develop their networking skills, and thus help them to better integrate into the Finnish labor market. All materials and tools are available on the DigiMESH website in both Finnish and English.

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