

The Atenea project

The Atenea project started in March 2008 and will finish in March 2009. The project was initiated by the Manresa City Council (Spain). The background for launching this project was the fact that many women are working in jobs for which they are over qualified. Many of these women were working in male dominated professions. The question was raised: Why are so many women working below their qualifications although their professional profiles are good?

The aim of the Atenea project is to show that women have the potential but that there are few opportunities on the job market. The project aims at empowering women to find good jobs that correspond with their qualities and professional qualifications. The goal is to develop good practice and a methodology to empower women to find good jobs for which they are qualified.

The target group:

- Young women who have just finished their studies
- Women with good qualifications and a profession but who do not have a job that corresponds with the qualifications
- Immigrant women who have studied in their home countries but who have problems working in Spain since it takes one year to have their studies assessed and accredited

The target group is not only women who have education at university level but also women with work experience.

Thirty women participate in the project and ten of them are of immigrant origin. Only one of them has had her studies assessed and validated in Spain. Most of the women of immigrant origin come from Central and South America. Others come from Africa (especially Morocco) but also from European countries (especially from Romania). Their major problem is to have their studies accredited. Most of them have a work permit except one that has a study permit.

Methodology

The tutors work at the same time with the women and with local companies. The tutors have to keep in mind the current situation in the labour market in the region, detecting the need of the companies and their availability to incorporate measures to promote the equality of chances.

The tutors also do a diagnosis of the employability of the women and they identify their needs, demands as well as the possible barriers that prevent the achievement of appropriate work.

Two different methodologies are used in this work, coaching and outplacement:

Coaching: The persons who are working in the Atenea project have been trained in coaching and use this methodology in their work with women who have problems with their motivation and who lack self esteem.

Outplacement: Outplacement consists in developing and implementing some techniques and a special methodology in order to help the relocation of one or some professional workers into the job market. Outplacement is a way to re-orientate professional careers. It can be implemented in groups (company closings) as well as in individuals (middle and high profiles and management staff).

Some questions to be considered in outplacement:

- Where am I? What is my current situation?
- Who am I?
- What do I want to reach?
- What should my research strategy be?
- How do I have to act?
- How do I have to negotiate my contract of employment?
- How can I be successful in a new job?

The process starts when the professionals lose their job (their emotional state/situation, how to translate it to their families and to their social entourage, the message that they have to send to their customers, professional team, co-workers, suppliers) and it finishes when the professional is integrated in a new company.

These are the different stages involved in this process:

- **Personal and professional self analysis** (professional diagnosis and career assessment): what does she/he know, what she/he can do successfully (achievements), motivations and needs, professional style, the way to mix with other people.
- **Definition of the research strategy:** Establishing professional goals (continuity project, change and/ or break), defining sectors and target companies.
- **Personal marketing techniques:** How to succeed in a job interview, non verbal communication, CVs and letters, how to respond to an advertisement, how to search business information, how to negotiate and above all there is emphasize on networking (how to use the social network).

The aim is to improve the women's empowerment and skills. This is achieved through seminars with expert consultants, practices in companies and workshops. The tutors also carry out individual sessions of orientation and insertion.