

EmpowerHer at the Heart of Conference on “New European Impulses in Integration Work” – A Decade of Commitment

Date: May 27, 2025

Venue: Quaz – Somborner Str. 84, 44894 Bochum

Occasion: 10 Years of Integration Work at Quaz

Event Title: “*Neue Europäische Impulse in der Integrationsarbeit*”

On May 27, 2025, Gewerkstatt gGmbH hosted a major conference marking 10 years of dedicated work with refugees and migrants. Held at the Quaz Integration and Language Center in Bochum, the event brought together practitioners, educators, policymakers, and European project partners for a forward-looking exchange under the title “*New European Impulses in Integration Work.*”

Highlights of the Day

Opening & Retrospective:

The event opened with a warm Get Together, guided tours of the Quaz facilities, and a reflection by Werner Fuhrmann, Managing Director of Gewerkstatt, who provided a retrospective on integration work since 2015—covering key programs such as *Fast Lane*, the *Förderzentrum*, and the establishment of *Quaz* itself.



European Perspectives:

- **Ofelya Weinblat** presented how **EU projects like EmpowerHer** bring new methods and innovation into local integration strategies—highlighting trauma-sensitive training, peer-to-peer models, and digital learning.
- **Helmut Kronika** (BEST, Austria), Austrian partner of EmpowerHer project, offered insights into Austria’s work with youth from migrant backgrounds, creating a rich cross-border exchange.



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Interactive Workshops were held in the frame of the conference, including

1. **VR-Based Qualification in EmpowerHer**
Led by Claudia Kniefelkamp, this workshop gave hands-on insight into EmpowerHer's virtual reality training tools designed for refugee women entering the hospitality sector. Participants were able to try out the VR headsets and learn about the gamified approach being implemented across all partner countries.
2. **Mental Wellbeing & Integration**
Delivered by Olena Bardakova (Gewerkstatt, Germany), and partners from Mindshift (Portugal) and RCF (Bulgaria), this workshop focused on mental health support for refugee populations which is a key aspect in EmpowerHer project

Podium Discussion: "What's Next for Integration?"

The event concluded with a dynamic **panel discussion** featuring:

- **Peter Lübbert** (Gewerkstatt/Quaz)
- **Serdar Yüksel**, Member of the Bundestag
- Representatives from the **Agentur für Arbeit** and **IHK Mittleres Ruhrgebiet**



Discussions focused on future measures needed for long-term integration and the role of **EU** cooperation, digital tools, and sector-specific training models.

Throughout the day, the EmpowerHer project was referenced as a model of how European collaboration and innovative training methods—including VR, language learning from 0 to B1, and peer mentoring—can drive inclusive change.

A heartfelt thank you to all speakers, partners, and guests for making the event a true celebration of progress and partnership.