

# EUROGUIDANCE STUDY VISIT "GUIDANCE IN VET"

Slovenia and Croatia  
17-20 April 2023

## BOOKLET OF GOOD PRACTICES



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# INTRODUCTION

**Euroguidance Slovenia and Euroguidance Croatia are pleased to welcome you at their joint study visit “Guidance in VET”!**

This study visit will focus on the topic of lifelong guidance in vocational education and training in Slovenia and Croatia, including the offer of lifelong guidance tools and services, presentation and comparison of good practices in lifelong guidance in Slovenia and Croatia, as well as examples of quality cooperation between schools and the employment sector.

In addition to having an excellent opportunity to see new and interesting practices in guidance in VET offered by different hosting organisations in Slovenia and Croatia, participants will also be able to network and share quality guidance practices from their home countries, which may encourage their future cooperation at European level.

This booklet is a collection of good practices from participants' daily practice and contains information about methods, target groups and expected objectives of their own guidance initiatives, which indeed seem to promise a very inspiring learning exchange! We are looking forward to welcoming you at the study visit!

Yours sincerely,  
Sabina & Mia

## What will you find in this booklet?

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# GOOD PRACTICES FROM CROATIA

by Tihana Hrkač

The **Croatian Employment Service** (CES) is a public institution owned by the Republic of Croatia, established under the Labour Market Act, and it plays a key role in regulating supply and demand in the labour market of the Republic of Croatia. CES acts as a “labour market mediator” by developing high quality services in line with the needs of clients.



It has been identified as the main holder of systematically organized activities of informing, guidance and counselling aimed at different users – from pupils and students in their finishing years of primary and secondary school to different groups of adults, the unemployed and job seekers, as well as the employers. The Croatian Employment Service (CES) is recognised as the main provider of systematically organized lifelong vocational guidance activities for various target groups in the Republic of Croatia. Vocational guidance is a set of professional procedures which helps pupils and students choose a future profession or education, and is carried out in cooperation with the school and parents/guardians. Vocational guidance of pupils includes vocational informing and vocational counselling. Special emphasis in this process is placed on determining pupil’s abilities, skills, professional interests and motivation, as well as on education and employment opportunities in a particular region.

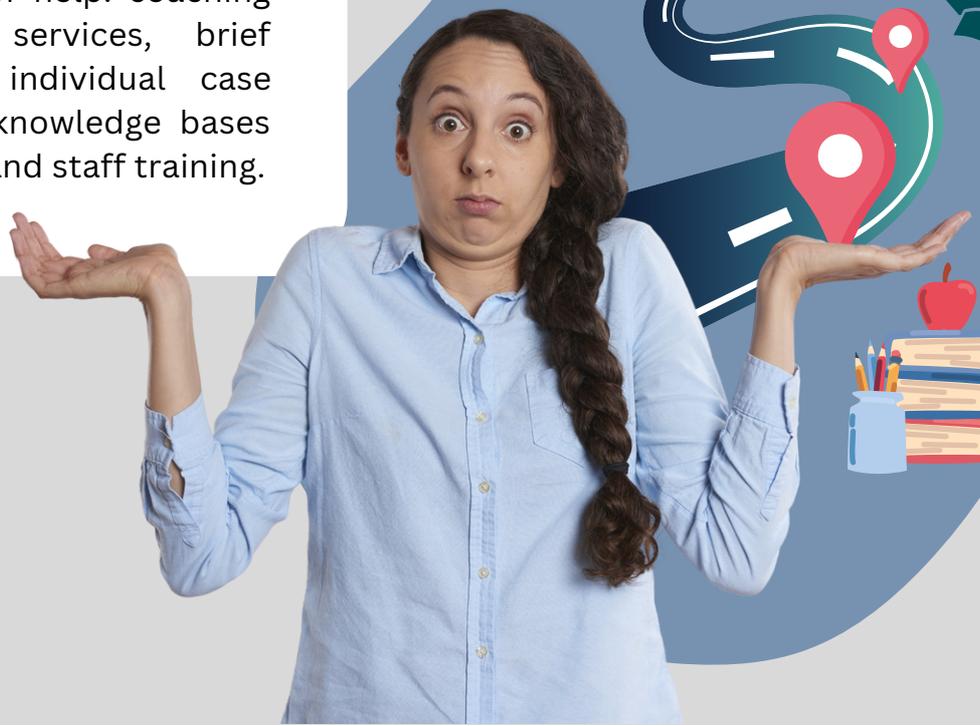
Every year CES identifies priority groups of pupils and students who are involved in various forms of vocational guidance - vocational informing, vocational counselling and/or overall psychological and medical treatment, depending on their specific needs. Special attention is given to pupils and students who are undecided about their career and for those who are expected to have difficulty accessing the labour market after completing their education (students with developmental disabilities or severe health problems). The vocational guidance of pupils in the final grades of primary and secondary school is represented by the so-called "early intervention" in the sense of providing professional assistance when making adequate decisions about the choice of educational programs and employment, and prevention of risk factors for school failure and/or early school leaving and possible social exclusion.

Pupils and students are one of the CES's most important clients. According to the CES's organisational structure, pupils and students are primary clients of Vocational guidance and education unit and CISOK centre. Vocational guidance and education unit put the emphasis on working with pupils and students with some developmental and/or health disabilities, and undecided pupils and student who need psychological counselling and testing, while CISOK primarily works with general population of pupils and students providing lifelong career guidance services depending on their needs.

### **Lifelong career guidance centre - CISOK**

The network of CISOK centres was established by the CES in 2013 for ensuring the decentralized provision of information, advice and guidance on careers and educational opportunities through 'one-stop-shops' at the local level. Centres are established to provide accessible, open and recognizable services and to enhance the existing career guidance and counselling services in Croatia.

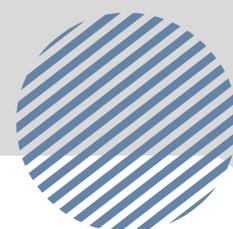
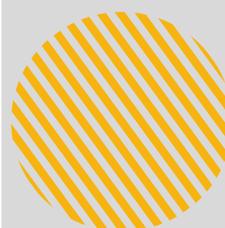
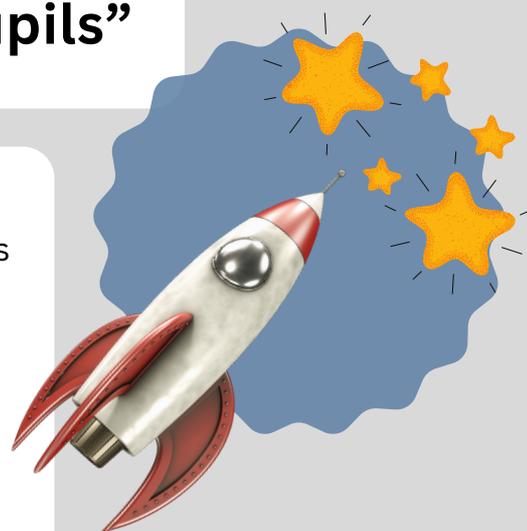
The purpose of the CISOK centres is to provide lifelong career guidance services to all citizens based upon identified needs of clients – young people, adults, employed, those outside the labor market – NEETS, students, teachers and employers. The Centres provides triage support at different levels of help: coaching clients, self-help services, brief assisted services, individual case managed services, knowledge bases on career guidance and staff training.



## Title of the method, practice or initiative: “**Vocational counselling of undecided primary and secondary school pupils**”

### **Expected outcomes:**

- identify undecided primary and secondary school pupils who need help with decision making about future education or employment
- pupils will be familiarised with the procedure, purpose and process of vocational guidance - informing and counselling
- pupils will receive the necessary information related to future education or employment
- pupils will be familiarised with the purpose and procedure of psychological counselling
- after completing psychological testing, pupils will get the feedback about their results
- based on the results, pupils will receive recommendation of 3-5 educational programs
- early intervention and a prevention of a drop-out as well as potential NEET-status of pupils



### **Target group:**

- undecided primary and secondary school pupils (final grades)

Croatian educational system is slightly different from those in other European countries. Pupils are at “life turning point” after finishing primary school when they have to make a decision about enrolling in a secondary school, and another time when they finish secondary school and have to decide about their future education or employment. For these reasons we place special emphasis on working with primary and secondary school pupils (especially final grades).

The purpose of the entire procedure is the identification of undecided pupils and pupils who need help and support in the decision-making process. The majority of pupils from all primary and secondary schools are informed (self-informed or informed with assistance of their school counsellors or CES/CISOK counsellors) through brochures, leaflets, on-line tools (publicly accessible web portals) and various types of group informing. Vocational informing (via ZOOM platform or live) was conducted in all primary and secondary schools in our county.

During the group informing, pupils and students are presented with all the opportunities and services they can get from CES and CISOK centres, as well the vocational guidance procedure itself, and all the information related to the labour market. In the end, smaller groups of pupils and students are included in the individual multidisciplinary approach which (if needed) includes the entire procedure of psychological counselling. This procedure is conducted only by a psychologist from Vocational guidance and education unit because it includes psychological testing, and could be as an example of a good practice in working with pupils and students. Psychological counselling is intended to be held in two parts: **psychological testing** and **feedback** about the results and final recommendation.

Psychological counselling often includes **psychological testing** and is one of the most comprehensive procedures in the vocational guidance process. This is the first step in this procedure. It includes various types of psychological tests and questionnaires (cognitive tests, personality trait questionnaires, different ability test, professional interest, motivation...). Psychological testing could be a group or individual procedure and it lasts about 3 hours. After the testing, pupils get the feedback about their results.

Giving (and receiving) **feedback** to pupils about their results and advising them accordingly, is one of the most demanding processes. The results must be presented to pupils in an adequate and comprehensible way, respecting all professional rules and ethical codes. At the beginning, we always ask them about their expectations concerning the results. This is always a good starting point, because then we know how to form feedback properly. Giving feedback to pupils always needs to be an individualised approach. This individual counselling lasts approximately 1 hour per pupil.

Besides the psychological tests result, results obtained by pupils using self-assessment e-tools (questionnaires of interests and competences, questionnaires for self-assessment of personality traits...) were also analysed. Pupils are also informed about the possibilities of continuing their education, about different faculties and study courses, the requirements of certain programs, as well as the advantages and disadvantages. Also, information related to the labour market were presented to pupils and students who do not plan to continue their education (employment opportunities, statistics on employment/unemployment, information about the professions and education opportunities, etc...).

For this purpose, various publications and brochures were used (see the link below). At the end of this procedure, an extensive interview is conducted with the pupils, during which anamnestic data were collected about the way they functioned in high school, study habits, organizational skills, the process of decision making about enrolling a high school, but also any other challenges they faced in their previous education.



Summarised everything above, 3-5 educational programs are recommended to pupils.

The most common reasons why pupils and students decide to be a part of this procedure are the following:

- *“I don’t know if I should go to college or get a job”*
- *“I’m not sure what to study”*
- *“I did all the previous steps (informing, self-assessment e-tools...) but I still don’t know where to enroll”*
- *“I’m interested in one area, but I think I’m much better in another one”*
- *“I know what I’m interested in, but I’m not sure if I’m “capable enough to finish it”*
- *“I’ve never been on a psychological testing so I’m interested in what it all looks like”*
- *“I want to study psychology”*
- *“Other...”*

After the entire procedure is completed, an evaluation form was sent to the pupils, in order to examine their satisfaction with the provided services, but also to collect suggestions for further improvements. Pupils express great satisfaction with the whole procedure, and most often continue their education in one of the recommended areas.

### Links for further information:

Links for further information are accessible on the e-Guidance web site. This web portal was developed by the CES in 2015, and it is intended for all target groups, whether they are pupils, students, the unemployed or employed people looking for a career change. e-Guidance offers numerous information and advice that can help clients in the development of their careers and successful decision-making.

- [e-Guidance web portal](#)
  - [Self-Assessment Questionnaires](#)
    - **My choice (Moj izbor):** Self-assessment questionnaire on interest and competences for clients who are choosing a profession or thinking about changing professions, as well as those who want to learn more about specific occupations (information on more than 257 different occupations)
    - **Self-Assessment Questionnaire on Personality Traits:** Self-assessment questionnaire to help individuals determine how their personality traits can be of value in different types of jobs
  - [High school educational programmes](#)
  - [Regional brochure for primary school pupils](#) „Where to go after the primary school“ (Northwestern part of Croatia)
  - [Higher education opportunities](#)
  - [Recommendations for enrolment education policy](#)
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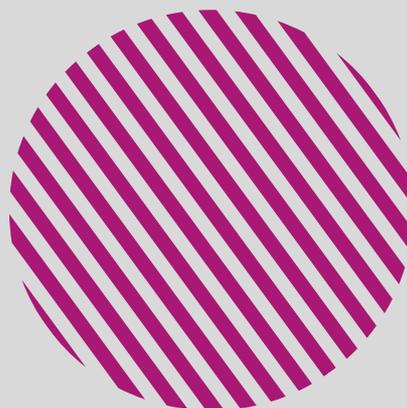
# GOOD PRACTICES FROM CYPRUS

by Leonidas Eracleous  
& Valentina Zenonos

## The individualized counseling approach of the Public Employment Service of Cyprus

Within the framework of making the Public Employment Service of Cyprus more effective, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance has sought, in the past few years, to employ professionals with a counseling, psychology, or a similar background to constitute the counselors of the District Labour Offices. Although the role of the employment counselor is to assist any person with difficulties finding a job, it mainly focuses in assisting disadvantaged or vulnerable unemployed individuals enter or reintegrate into the labor market.

This group of individuals may consist of young people with no professional skills or significant work experience (e.g., the newly graduated), the NEETs, the long term unemployed, people from minorities, and the ones who face mental, emotional, social or other issues that hinder their employability and place them at risk of socioeconomic exclusion and marginalization. Furthermore, the employment counselor may assist groups facing difficulties in finding a job, such as middle aged individuals who have lost their job or those who struggle in adjusting to the changes of the labor market, find satisfying employment.



As in any other form of counseling, the services of the employment counselor are provided on a cooperative basis, that is the individual who receives the counseling services agrees to do so in his or her own will. In other words, counseling requires the consent and the collaboration of the counselee. For this to happen, the potential counsees need to be informed about the option of being seen by and work closely with a counselor. Although some job seekers who are registered at the PES may know about the option of the individualized counseling approach and may even request by themselves to see a counselor, the majority is unaware of this possibility. Informing job seekers about the possibility and option to be seen by a counselor is done by labor officers or the counselors themselves, during the jobseekers' visits to the labor offices or via telephone, mostly for registrations and job search matching. After a job seeker is being informed about the possibility of receiving counseling services, he or she is asked whether he or she is interested to receive such a service. When a job seeker expresses an interest to receive counseling, he or she is being referred to a counselor, who will later contact the former to arrange the first individualized counseling meeting.

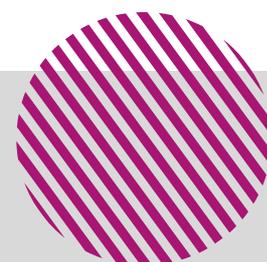
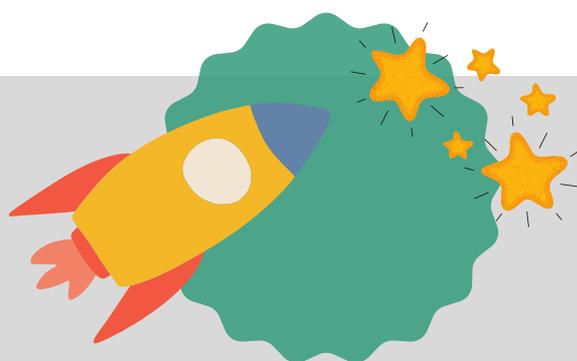
Apart from providing more information and establishing the outlines of counseling, the first meeting of the individualized counseling procedure provides the opportunity for both parts, i.e., the counselor and the counselee, to start getting to know each, setting the foundations of a working alliance. After the introductions and further explanations as to what is to be expected by the individualized approach, the counselor begins to gather data, through a structured interview, regarding the job seeker's career objectives or professional goals, current employability barriers, difficulties or challenges, and his or her strengths and weaknesses. These data will allow the counselor to develop an individualized action plan, which will guide the counselor's practice throughout the counseling course. Having an adequate picture of the jobseekers short-term or long-term goals, skills, capabilities and deficiencies, will help the counselor employ an individualized approach toward the person who seeks counseling. Employability dimensions such as job search, career decision making, job maintenance and vocational training needs must also be examined, in order to obtain an accurate representation on what steps must be taken towards helping the jobseeker achieve his or her overall professional goals.

After the development of the jobseeker's professional profile, the counselor needs to assess the level of job-readiness of the counselee. Therefore, during the next individualized sessions the counselor will determine the jobseeker's strengths and weaknesses and clarify what the jobseeker is already capable or skillful of doing, how he or she can fill gaps and tackle weak points that prevent employability, and how he or she can develop qualities that improve the desired career objectives. Depending on the situation, the counselor can either start the job search, aiming for the best possible outcome in matching a job seeker to a vacancy, or recommend vocational training as a more beneficial option, with regards to the jobseeker's goals.

When the jobseeker agrees to participate in a vocational training program, he or she is being referred to any appropriate program offered by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus and/or the Cyprus Productivity Center. These two organizations offer a variety of training programs from a wide range of categories (e.g. digital skills, health and safety, managerial development, technical and professional training) and are free of charge for the candidates who are register in our department as full-time unemployed.

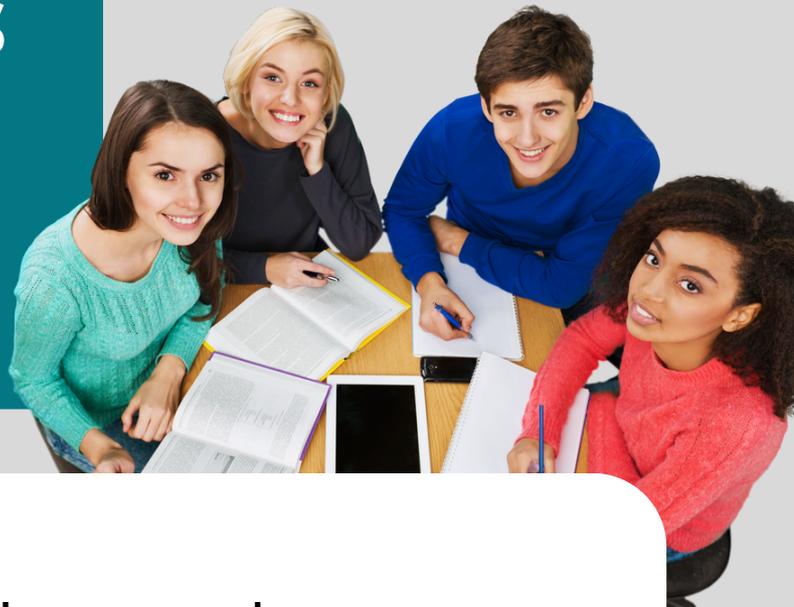
In many cases, it takes several counseling meetings before a job seeker is ready to be referred or matched to a vacancy. Because the counselor's target group is, more often than not, vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals, it is essential that the counsees are being empowered before the job searching starts. Specifically, some job seekers need guidance to deal with personal, social, emotional and other issues that prevent their easy transition to employment. In other situations, job seekers need to acquire essential skills for getting and maintaining a job. Still, in other situations, jobseekers need to overcome anxiety and other negative feelings associated with unemployment and social exclusion. To this end, each counselor is more or less free to employ his or her own techniques and methods to enable the job seeker into a competent job candidate. In any case, the objective of each counselor, and the essence of counseling itself, is to empower and assist the counselee enter the labor market, and achieve, in the short or long term, a sustainable, satisfying and meaningful employment.

Usually, counseling is concluded when a jobseeker finds a job. This is a desired goal within the individualized counseling approach of the Public Employment Service. This goal may be reached either through a job placement after a referral or matching to a vacancy by the counselor, or by the jobseeker finding a job by himself or herself. Again, what is important is that the jobseeker/ counselee finds the best possible job, based on his or her desires and capabilities, or a job that would potentially help the jobseeker achieve his or her long-term professional goals. For this reason, there are instances in which counseling may continue even after a jobseekers employment. In such cases, the counselor provides support, guidance and coaching, helping the jobseeker overcome possible difficulties and work adjusting problems, while also monitoring his or her work performance improvement. The ideal goal of employment counseling will then be reached when the jobseeker/ counselee, through the support and guidance of the counselor, develops the appropriate professional mind-set, as well as the appropriate occupational skills and competencies, that will allow him or her to sustain employment and potentially evolve along a satisfying and meaningful career path.



# GOOD PRACTICES FROM GERMANY

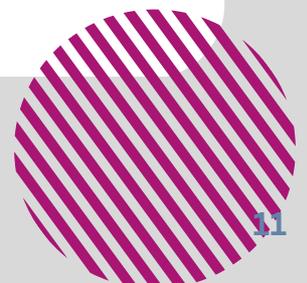
by Carolin Zöller & Elena Manvelian



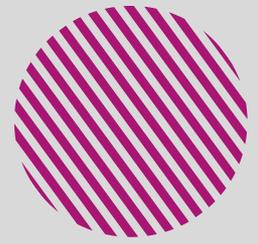
## Empowerment of students and young people finishing school

Career guidance in Germany, especially for young people attending school, is the core task of the career counsellor of the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)). In accordance with German law the career guidance has to be offered and people have to be supported in the process of finding their career choice until they end up finding their apprenticeship, study opportunity or a job. Additionally, it is defined that the career guidance counsellors have the task to give professional guidance by teaching lessons in schools.

In 2020 the concept of career guidance counselling from the Bundesagentur für Arbeit in Germany has been developed further. This was caused by new situations at the labour market, such as the shortage of skilled manpower, digitisation and by discontinuous and nonlinear pathways. A lifelong career guidance is the answer to these challenges and a Nationwide Lifelong Guidance Service has been established. It is divided into two main services, pre-employment vocational guidance (BBvE) and employment career guidance (BBiE). Providing the pre-employment vocational guidance, I support young people in their career choice.



# Well-prepared for your professional start



**Well-prepared for your professional start** (Federal Employment Agency, 2022, p. 6) is a slogan of career guidance before working life. Therefore, BBvE starts early to support young people with vocational orientation and expert counselling. Career guidance counsellors are located at all general education schools and offer in-person guidance early in pre-graduation classes. But, counselling is also part of vocational schools and universities. Therefore, the number of career guidance counsellors has been increased during the last years. For example, the team I am working for has grown up from 10 to 18 employees working in this area.

Career guidance can be understood as a process and orientation, counselling, placement and support are typical for it. In general, career guidance is not a singular event, it has follow-up appointments till the process is finalised. As a result, at least four counselling appointments are compulsory per student at general education school and three appointments at the high school.

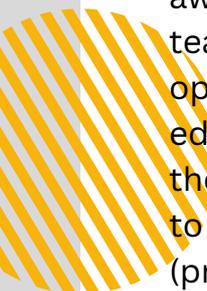
As a career guidance counsellor, it is my task to provide information about apprenticeships and dual studies, inform about different professions and about forms of further education and application deadlines as well as to be expert about the (local) labour market and much more.

Actually, I am responsible for two general education schools and one vocational school in my region. Besides, I counsel graduates and organise education fairs.

My service is also addressed to parents and teachers, but the main target groups to address are still students attending the pre-graduation class of general education schools or students from year 9 of high schools.

The factor time plays a crucial role for providing comprehensive guidance service. Only if you have enough time to work on individual professional career goals a good solution and pathway can be found.

In my daily work this new way of lifelong career guidance has shown in a weekly counselling session of students of different schools in my office. By offering weekly counselling sessions in schools I get to know students and teachers better and get a better understanding for their needs in terms of their career development.



I support for example an integrated education school being located only 2 km away from my office. Every Wednesday I am at the school for counselling or teaching lessons about the German school system, apprenticeship or (dual) study opportunities. I get to know students starting from the 8 grade of the general education school. Normally students are thirteen years old and I support them till they have found their employment. When I am at school, the students can come to my class room without appointment to ask for support or I go around to ask the (pre-) graduation class if any help is needed.

During their educational period at school the students have generally the chance to do two internships. I support the students by finding out which individual profession suits them the best and which company has the best training offers for them. Often, we look together for open internship offers or we look after alternatives after a placement. The Bundesagentur für Arbeit has developed several digital platforms to support my work such as [berufenet.de](https://www.berufenet.de) (available only in German), where students can find further information and links referring to the professions.

Consequently, in many cases I accompany the students during the years before they find their future professional way. As their career practitioner and expert, I do my best to build trust and close exchange between us by listening to their needs and professional plans. This weekly time is given to us through the concept of lifelong career guidance and has improved my work at school.

In my opinion, empowerment is a very important aspect of career counselling. What does that mean in concrete terms?

Through my input in class or individual counselling I want to empower my students in confidence and control about their career choice. I want them to take over the control over and the responsibility for their own life and thus to be an active part, instead of waiting on what will happen to them on its own.

Furthermore, I want to help them become more independent by getting reliable information, learning to have trust in themselves and in me as an expert, using their participation in class and attending counselling out of interest. The accountability and responsibility for oneself through experiences and belief in dreams is a necessary part to empower the students. Thus, the empowerment often is not done in one counselling meeting, it takes time.

Next, I am going to share one of my favourite empowerment methods.





Once in a school year it is my task to introduce the students their opportunities after getting their secondary school qualifications. For example, this can be attending a secondary vocational school for leaving with a higher school certificate or looking for an apprenticeship to start working.

Some years ago, the standard was to give a simple presentation for 2 lessons (one lesson = 45 min.). So, there was hardly any interaction or discussion on (dis-)advantages of different opportunities in the German education and vocational system.

With regard to empowerment and lifelong learning it is important to develop communication skills. I like student centred methods, for instance Gallery Walk is one of my favourite methods. I use it for class activities to promote communication and critical thinking skills. I appreciate that students have to move and communicate about a topic. At the same time, students have the chance to explore knowledge by themselves and I am able to check their state of knowledge and opinion about a topic. They compare ideas, share new thoughts or debate over several aspects. Additionally, it has shown that the collaboration and the focus of the students has grown while using this method.

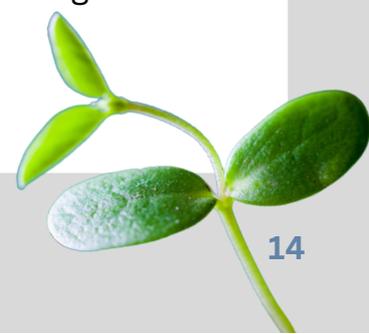
### **What do you need for Gallery Walk?**

I need four large paper as posters, four pencils with different colours (one colour for every group), a topic, a classroom and students.

### **How does Gallery Walk work?**

Students have to work together in small groups to create a poster and share it with others. First, I divide my class into, for example four, groups. Each group has to work on their own topic and write their ideas on the given poster. It is allowed to use additional material such as factsheets or mobile phones. The task of each group is to talk about the given topic and decide, which information they want to write down on the poster. A group agreement is the aim.

In my case group 1 has the topic (dual) apprenticeship, group 2 vocational training in school, group 3 further school certificate, group 4 gap year. Every group has to look after key words and to think about advantages and disadvantages of the topic.



Secondly, when the first creation time is up, I give a sign and the groups walk to the next poster. So, group 1 walks to the poster of group 2, group 2 walks to the poster of group 3 and so on. Now, each group has a certain amount of time to check on the results of the previous group. Afterwards, they get the chance to add their ideas to the poster of the other group with their own colour. That means for example group 1 gets the green pen, creates their own poster with that, switches to the poster of group 2 (blue pen) and adds their ideas with their green pen. The Gallery Walk consists of four rounds, so every group is able to see and share ideas on the four different topics.

Finally, the groups return to their own poster and reconsider their solution using the given opinions from the other groups and improve their own solution.

I expect that through Gallery Walk students are encouraged to work together on an opinion but even staying mind open to the thoughts of their classmates. By this, it is possible to form up new opinions when a new information comes to light. After the last round, we talk about the posters in class and questions can be answered or arguments can be discussed.

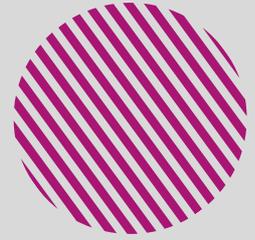
I used this method the last two years in school to promote information about the opportunities after school and the advantages or possible disadvantages of them. In my opinion it worked very well and the feedback of the students being part of it was very positive. The students enjoyed to work together and contribute their knowledge to the topic. Another positive aspect for them was the walking around instead of sitting at the chairs and wait for something to happen.

As this is a way to encourage the participation of students in class, I use this method frequently with different topics to give information and to promote a change of perspective on a topic.

The student-centred way of learning is one of the elements of the lifelong career guidance of the Bundesagentur für Arbeit and it has changed the work of career guidance counsellors. It is not only about providing the students with information but more about empowering and motivating the students to find their best possible career pathway.

I'm looking forward to the exchange with the Euroguidance network colleagues. I am very curious to get acquainted with good practice examples from other countries to enlarge the scope of my knowledge.

## Links for further information:



**Education in Germany:** <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/education>

**Apprenticeships in Germany:** <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/video-apprenticeships-in-germany>

**Berufenet:** <https://web.arbeitsagentur.de/berufenet/>

**Official Study Guide for Germany:** <https://studienwahl.de/en>

**Gallery Walk:**

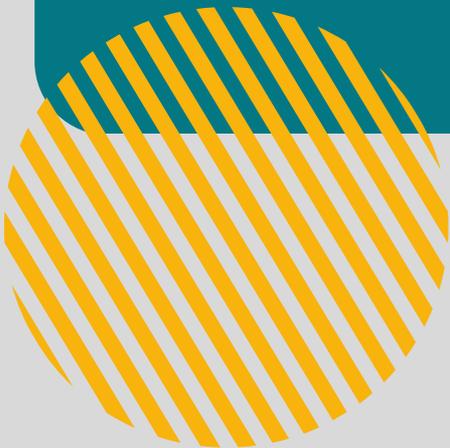
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJTi51JXiRU>

**Guidance system in Germany:**

<https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems-and-practice/national-guidancesystems/guidance-system-in-germany>

**Federal Employment Agency. (2022). Lifelong guidance offered by the Federal Employment Agency.**

[https://www.euroguidancedeutschland.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/LBB-der-BA\\_en.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.euroguidancedeutschland.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/LBB-der-BA_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3)



# GOOD PRACTICES FROM MALTA (1)

by Jessica Borg

## Title of the method, practice or initiative: **Soft Skills practices embedded with career guidance initiatives**

### **Aim of the practice:**

Schools place great emphasis on standardised testing to assess student achievement (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). In fact, during the compulsory school years, schools strive to build students' academic knowledge to prepare them for their next transition to post-secondary institutions and/or into the workforce. As a career guidance practitioner, my work consists of organising initiatives that help students with decision-making learning, opportunity awareness, transition learning, and self-awareness (Law & Watts, 2003). These may include meeting employers, visits to various workplaces as well as post-secondary institutions in order for students to gain first-hand experience of the world of work. During these initiatives, it is important for students to ask the right questions and make a good first impression. Unfortunately, I find that students lack soft skills, which are intangible social skills that help them navigate daily life in the workplace or simply in school with their teachers and peers. Heckman & Kautz (2012) argue that success in life is not only measured by IQ and standardised tests, but also depends on a person's soft skills and personality traits. In fact, Heckman & Kautz's (2012) research has shown that these traits predict and cause outcomes. Therefore, these skills are at the heart of every initiative we organise, as they will help students navigate future careers that do not even exist yet.





## **Expected outcomes:**

### **Understanding and identifying what are soft skills**

First and foremost, students need to understand and be able to recognise what soft skills are. Soft skills refer to a set of personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviours that make someone a good employee (Vasanthakumari,2019). It is also important that students understand the major difference between the two types of skills, the hard and soft skills. Hard skills are the technical skills that individuals use in their daily work, such as computer programming or manual skills used on the job. Hard skills can be proven and measurable, whereas soft skills are intangible and not easily quantifiable because they enable effective communication (Dixon et. Al, 2010). Therefore, hard skills tend to be job specific, while soft skills are universally transferable skills (Cimatti, 2016).

Soft skills include interpersonal qualities that, when combined with emotional intelligence, enhance an individual's interactions, professional and academic development and performance, and career prospects (Vasanthakumari,2019). There are many key soft skills that need to be applied in the workplace. Therefore, soft skills training should begin at a young age so that students can be effective in their academic environment and future workplace.

### **Understanding the importance of soft skills**

The above has clarified the magnitude of softskills. Thus, secondly, it is also key for students to understand the context of why softskills are so important in the workplace. In the 21st century, the labour market has become uncertain and precarious because the path to employment is not linear anymore, where one climbs the ladder along the years within the same job for life. Rather, these are mini cycles of destandardized transitions into the workforce that require students to make more individual decisions (Walther, 2006). In addition, all applicants present the same qualifications in order to be eligible to apply for a job, which makes it difficult for recruiters to choose the right applicant (Cimatti, 2016). To stay ahead of their competitors, students have no choice but to supplement their hard skills with soft skills to show their true potential (Cimatti, 2016; Wats & Wats, 2009). Soft skills, then, are what set one apart from other applicants and what help to get and keep a job in an ever-changing and competitive environment.

**Target group:**

I am a principal career advisor working in compulsory education and I therefore manage the career initiatives within our college. The college consists of a cluster of 4 primary schools, and 2 secondary schools (the secondary includes 1 middle school for 11- to 13- year-olds, from which students transfer to the other secondary school for 13- to 15-year-olds). In our secondary school, I use soft skills with 13- and 14-year-old students in Year 9 and Year 10. In Year 9 we invite entrepreneurs to our school to talk to our students and/or we organise industry visits so students can see careers that interest them. In Year 10 we help students to write a CV, conduct job interviews, and learn about work ethics, values, and workers' rights. Before taking part in these initiatives, we (career advisors) organise class interventions during which we prepare them on soft skills, as these are key to unlocking students' potential.

We, career advisors, plan, embed and deliver these class interventions within the careers section of the Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) curriculum. PSCD is a subject taught by teachers within the Maltese compulsory education, but it is not assessed as it is about students' self-development.

**Description of the practice and initiative:**

We plan several exercises with students to put the above into practice and achieve the desired soft skills outcomes. The type of soft skills exercise is linked to the following initiative, depending on the year group, so that there is continuity and a solid rationale, as explained in the sections above.

In Year 9, we provide students with quizzes, tables, or games to build their soft skills vocabulary and grasp its meaning. We then give them situational scenarios that they can relate with their relationships with friends, teachers, and family, as well as with sports or other hobbies they practice. In this way, they learn about and identify the use of soft skills in their life so that they can articulate this knowledge and use it to their advantage. This is also linked to activities where students explore their qualities, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and career aspirations during PSCD lessons.

For Year 10 students, we invite Jobsplus, the national Public Employment Service, to conduct a workshop for our students. We do an activity where a small group of students pretends to be the board of directors that will hire an employee. Then we ask the students to identify the skills the employee needs and justify why they would hire a particular applicant among others. Then we show them a video explaining what soft skills are and the difference between hard and soft skills. This is effective because it helps students understand the employability skills employers look for when hiring an employee and it prepares them for their mock interview.

## Links for further information:

**Year 9s Resources:** The link includes quizzes and lists of soft skills which we then adapt to life situations:

<https://maacce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Soft-Skills-Learning-Materials.pdf>

### Year 10s Activity: Soft Skills/Hard Skills Exercise

Students are given the role of members of a board of directors who are going to employ new employees – e.g.: a salesperson and a receptionist.

A brainstorming session will follow to identify the skills needed for these two roles to choose the best candidates.

In the meantime, the teacher will divide the white board into three parts and start listing the skills mentioned accordingly as shown in the table below.

We show students the below [video that explains soft skills in an engaging way](#) and from which we then create a discussion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tiy2LONr050&t=14s>

HARD SKILLS	SOFT SKILLS	PERSONALITY
<i>Computer certificate</i>	<i>communication</i>	<i>smart</i>
<i>Certificates</i>	<i>numeracy skills</i>	
<i>Driving License</i>	<i>teamwork</i>	
	<i>foreign language</i>	
	<i>time management</i>	

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# GOOD PRACTICES FROM MALTA (2)

by Thomas Camilleri

Title of the method,  
practice or initiative:  
**Explore More Project**



## Introduction:

My interest in the use of Information Technology (IT) as a critical element in the provision of Career Guidance, stems directly from my endeavours as a Principal education support practitioner within the Gozo College (Malta). Because of my daily encounters with various students who come forward seeking guidance, the subject of information technology and online resources has emerged for me not only as a fundamental part of Career Guidance but also as an object of a personal quest.

For Career Guidance Practitioners[1], Information Technology, especially with regards to their service delivery, has transitioned from an extra tool to a necessary medium (Kettunen, Sampson, Vuorinen, 2013). If one were to step in the world of the typical teenager living in a post-COVID world, one would immediately notice that IT occupies a very central role in their lives. From communicating with their fellow peers, to sharing of documents, and to learning about extracurricular activities occurring after school hours, IT has become a medium which our students had built their lives around.

[1] Hereunder referred to as CGPs

**Expected outcomes:**

The main aim of this online resource is to digitalise and centralise the provision of Career Guidance services in Malta, by providing authentic, unbiased, comprehensible, and realistic information to both CGPs and their students so that the latter may make informed decisions about their future. In doing so, this resource helps students grow, both personally and professionally as it enables them to explore different career opportunities and possibilities. This website should also assist students in learning about themselves, their learning styles, as well as their career aspirations.

**Target group:**

The main target groups for this career guidance initiative are the Year 8 (Middle School) and Year 11 (Secondary School) students within the Maltese compulsory education system. These students are 13 and 16-year-old respectively and come from different socio-political backgrounds. They have different life aspirations, and their families are of different ethnic groups, and have different cultures, and backgrounds.

Although some minor curricular differences may apply, this website targets students who are currently attending state, church and private schools. This website also provides practical tips and suggestions to parents, teachers and CGPs in supporting the students' transition from the classroom to the place of work.

**Description of the method, practice or initiative:**

Prior to the launch of this website, the Maltese education department felt that there is a lacuna in the online resources which the Career Guidance practitioners could make use of, in helping students to prepare themselves for the post-compulsory education or the world of work.

At that time, most of the available resources were hard copy books, leaflets, charts etc., the majority of which were also written and published in foreign countries which might have different employment and educational realities when compared to Malta. Hence, the need for an online resource, which caters for the Maltese students was felt by all CGPs.

In a nutshell, the Explore More Portal aims to fill-in that vacuum by firstly providing standardised information about different prominent economic sectors in Malta, such as the health, IT and financial services sector. Students can access a detailed description of these sectors as well as the employment opportunities available within that particular sector.

Each employment opportunity is accompanied by a short job description as well as the post-secondary (or tertiary) courses which can enable these students to acquire the skills need to work within that particular employment sector.

The students can also watch a short (5 minute) interview with a professional who is currently working within that particular employment sector. The professional will explain in further detail what his/her typical day at work entails, as well as the main challenges related to their job. Moreover, the professional will highlight the main satisfactions related with that job and any advice they would like to pass on to the students who would like to pursue that particular career pathway.

The second facade of this website is there to assist students into making an informed decision about the choice of options subjects which occurs during Year 8. This website provides a self-reflective questionnaire which enables the student to learn more about themselves, their personality, interests, and preferred learning style. Subsequently, students have both audio-visual as well as written material on each and every subject which they can choose from.

### Links for further information:

#### [Explore More Project - EN](http://exploremoreproject.eu/en/)

<http://exploremoreproject.eu/en/>

#### [Explore More Project - MT](http://exploremoreproject.eu/mt/)

<http://exploremoreproject.eu/mt/>

### References

- Kettunen, J., Sampson, J., Jr. & Vuorinen, R., (2013). Career practitioners' conceptions of competency for social media in career services. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 43, 43-56. doi: 10.1080/03069885.2014.939945.

# GOOD PRACTICES FROM SERBIA

by Milena Mirić & Ramona Bacelj



Title of the method, practice or initiative:  
**What should I do after graduation?**

## Expected outcomes:

- Students are familiar with resources for identifying their skills and areas of interest;
- Students are familiar with resources for exploring educational and occupational opportunities;
- Students are encouraged to identify their skills and areas of interest, as well as to explore educational and occupational opportunities;
- Students are familiar with the steps in decision-making on choosing an occupation/a secondary school/a university programme;
- Students are encouraged to overcome the final exam anxiety;
- Students learned how to create an appropriate CV;
- Parents are encouraged to support their children in the process of decision-making on choosing an occupation/a secondary school/a university programme.

## Target group:

- Students in the final years of elementary and secondary schools

## Description of the method, practice or initiative:

In order to support students in the final years of primary and secondary schools in the process of decision-making on choosing a secondary school or a university programme respectively the Foundation Tempus – Euroguidance Serbia has developed and organized a series of webinars and online workshops.

Webinars and workshops are organized by the Euroguidance Serbia staff several times a month via platforms Webinar Ninja and Microsoft Teams. The topics discussed in the webinars and online workshops are relevant for exploring educational and career opportunities, as well as creating a CV and overcoming the final exam anxiety. Furthermore, for every webinar and online workshop a creative workbook for students is developed, which could be used during the session, as well as after the session as a reflective tool.

Students and parents can register for participation in webinars and online workshops by filling out the registration form available on <https://www.obrazovanje.rs/upis>. Furthermore, teachers can register and organize participation of a group of their students or the whole class in webinars and online workshops as part of the activities of the School Career Guidance and Counselling Team.

Since 2018, more than 4.000 primary and secondary school students, teachers and parents from Serbia have participated in these activities

## **WEBINARS AND ONLINE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS:**

### **Webinar "What should I do after secondary school? Steps in decision-making on choosing a university programme"**

In this webinar, the steps in decision-making and implementation of the decision are presented, as well as the preparation for the next stages of career development (e.g. adapting to a new environment). The most frequent questions and problems that secondary school graduates face while thinking about their choice of study are discussed, as well as practical guidelines on deciding about the next level of education.

### **Webinar "How to choose a secondary school?"**

In this webinar, the most frequent questions and dilemmas that primary school graduates face while thinking about the choice of a secondary school, are discussed as well as practical guidelines on deciding about the next level of education.

### **Webinar "How to overcome the final exam anxiety?"**

In this webinar, students can learn about different ways of overcoming the final exam anxiety and can create their own plan for preparing the exam and dealing with anxiety in case it comes up before the final exam.

### **Online Workshop "Identify your skills and areas of interest"**

In this online workshop, students can describe their skills, knowledge and work habits and learn how to relate them to different occupations, workplaces, secondary schools and university programmes. Furthermore, students can learn how to identify their own preferences and interests, to describe and analyze them, as well as to connect them with educational profiles in secondary schools, university programmes and occupations.

### **Online Workshop "Explore the occupations"**

In this online workshop, students can learn how to explore the information about occupations and training, identify the specifics of educational profiles and programmes, training and courses and become familiar with various resources that can be helpful in obtaining relevant information on the occupations and labor market opportunities.

### **Online Workshop "Explore your career opportunities"**

In this online workshop, students can learn how to analyse and define different options for their future career. Furthermore, students can explore various decision-making techniques and criteria and find available resources that can help them in obtaining all the relevant information about career opportunities and labor market.

### **Webinar and workshop "How to create a great CV?"**

"How to create a great CV" was initially developed as a webinar, but on several occasions it was delivered as an online or an onsite workshop for secondary school students. In this session students can learn what a good CV should look like, which sections are important in every good CV and what information should be included in it. Furthermore, during the session, the importance of the selfassessment of skills is discussed as well as the most common mistakes that people make while creating a CV and how they can be avoided. In addition, students can receive useful tips for creating a CV that can help them to stand out. Students are also introduced with the Europass portfolio and various ways of using the Europass platform as a tool for creating a CV and presenting their own competences.



## **WEBINAR FOR PARENTS**

"How to support a child in the process of decision-making on choosing a profession" webinar is created to help parents to find out which steps in choosing a secondary school/university programme/profession are particularly important and learn how they can support their children in preparation for the final exam.

**Links for further information:**

**Foundation Tempus - activities:** <https://www.obrazovanje.rs/upis>

