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ONLINE-GUIDANCE

Building Relationships in Digital Settings

Euroguidance Conference 2022
Vienna, 16 November, 2022



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Preface

Digitalisation has been a popular topic in the area of guidance since many years now, but it gained additional urgency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for accessible education and career counselling has increased. Across Europe, counselling services have found their way into online spaces as more and more funds were invested into the further development of virtual platforms and distance counselling.

Always keeping pace with the times:

The Euroguidance conference

The European Euroguidance network was established in 1992 and the Austrian Euroguidance center was founded in 1997. Since then, Euroguidance has been supporting and accompanying education and career counselling at a national as well as European and international level while at the same time providing new ideas and impetus. As a policy network of the European Commission, the Euroguidance network makes information available on a wide range of services and on EU funding programmes while providing networking opportunities and dealing with current developments and issues. The Austrian Euroguidance center has held annual conferences since 2000. These conferences give experts and practitioners in the field of education and career counselling from the whole of Europe a forum in which to discuss about and obtain information on current trends and developments.

Focus on online guidance

In 2022, the conference purposefully turned its attention towards Online guidance and building relationships in digital settings while highlighting current developments and success factors for successful online guidance in addition to pointing out the opportunities and limitations of digital settings.

In her opening address, **Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller** from OeAD explained that digital transformation forms part of one of four horizontal priorities of the current (2021–2027) Erasmus+ EU programme and that it has consequently been applied increasingly in the area of education and career counselling, which has led to a series of developments.

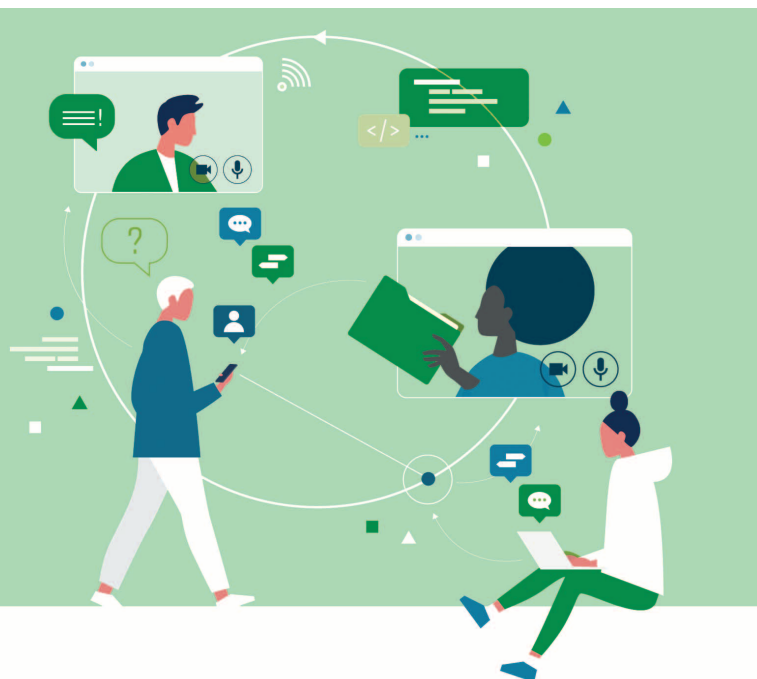
Cynthia Harrison from Cedefop outlined the digital developments in the area of lifelong guidance in her keynote speech as well as the need for counsellors to receive further training and the role that guidance plays in the recovery efforts after the pandemic by means of reskilling and upskilling.

Success factors of online guidance

Developing a counselling relationship is an important factor for successful online guidance, according to **Stefan Kühne** from Die Forschungsgreisslerei. In his lecture, he highlighted the possibilities of relationship building and explained what relationships online counsellors can have in education and career counselling while delineating the boundaries.

Practical insights

Examples from Austria and Estonia illustrated how online guidance offerings have developed over the past years. **Barbara Oberwasserlechner** and **Karin Okonkwo Klampfer** introduced the topic of online guidance in Austria, after which **Margit Rammo**, Euroguidance Estonia / Education and Youth Board of Estonia, and **Kristina Orion**, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, delivered insights into the latest developments in the area of online guidance in Estonia.



Euroguidance celebrated an anniversary in Global Careers Month

The event ended in a special way by celebrating the anniversaries of the Austrian Euroguidance center (25 years) and of the European network (30 years). European Euroguidance centers have become important contact points for education and career counsellors over the years, and it was a real pleasure to celebrate this. In addition, the conference was held during **Global Careers Month** as defined by Cedefop, the European Commission, ILO, OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank.

For the first time ever, the conference took place in hybrid form. Some 65 people used the opportunity to attend the event in person at Kardinal König Haus in Vienna, while more than 30 people followed the event online. The plenary lectures in the morning were streamed live for a European audience and are still available to view online. After the presentations, participants had an opportunity to network and interact in workshops with experts from Austria, Estonia, and Ireland. As the Euroguidance center in Austria, OeAD wishes to thank all of the speakers and participants from 18 countries who contributed towards the success of the conference.

We hope that this publication provides you not only with a comprehensive record of the 2022 Euroguidance conference, but also with inspirational ideas and practical tips for your future counselling activities.

The team of Euroguidance Austria wishes you an inspiring lecture!

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller
Eva Baloch-Kaloianov
Susanne Krischanitz
Arabella Seits

Euroguidance: 25 years of a European dimension in Austria's guidance scene (Translation from German)

Austria has been part of the European Euroguidance network for 25 years. This network is committed to the further development of educational and career counselling at a national as well as European level. The annual Euroguidance conference has been one of the highlights in Austria's networking activities for many years now. In 2022 – the anniversary year of both the Austrian Euroguidance centre and the European Euroguidance network – the Euroguidance conference took place as part of Global Careers Month. For the first time, this month of activities was held as an initiative of Cedefop, the European Commission, ILO, OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank.

In this context, numerous events at a regional, national, and international level were held in which a focus was placed on educational and career counselling as a political priority. We are pleased to have been part of this global campaign through our conference this year.

Digitalisation in educational and career counselling

The topic of digitalisation has become increasingly important in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the process of digitalisation, while simultaneously giving rise to new topics and questions. In particular, it highlighted the increased need to utilise the potential of digital technologies in teaching and learning, and to develop digital competences for everyone. Digital transformation is therefore one of the horizontal priorities in the current Erasmus+ EU programme that runs until the end of 2027.

Digitalisation has also made its way into educational and career counselling, not least of all because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has consequently led to a series of developments such as the creation of new Internet platforms. However, it is often not enough to simply make offers available online. Building rapport becomes a central topic in this regard. There is a need for good rapport between counsellors and clients in online-based career and educational counselling so that the offers are utilised and are effective. The inclusion and ability to reach people with lower levels of qualifications represents a particular challenge in this connection. This year's Euroguidance conference focused on building rapport in the age of digitalisation. Experts presented tips and recommendations as well as interesting examples from the field and in this way showed how to succeed in building rapport in digital education and career coun-

selling. The conference also featured a project exhibition and workshops.

25 years of Euroguidance in Austria, 30 years of Euroguidance in Europe

The Euroguidance network was established under the Petra EU programme in 1992. Soon after Austria joined the EU, a Euroguidance centre was founded in Austria in 1997. A total of 34 countries now collaborate in this European network. One of the objectives of Euroguidance is to promote the European dimension in the area of lifelong guidance, and to assist counsellors in developing competences, for instance by means of events such as the Euroguidance conference. Thanks to an intensive collaboration at a European and national level, many important new ideas have been implemented in the area of educational and career counselling. Since 2021, Austria has also been represented by OeAD employee Eva Baloch-Kaloianov as chair of the Steering Group of the European Euroguidance Network. This position helps to increase the flow of ideas from Austria into the network and vice versa from Europe to Austria.

As a so-called Policy Network of the European Commission, the tasks of Euroguidance include supporting and accompanying the Erasmus+ EU programme, in particular in the area of educational and career counselling. The Austrian Euroguidance centre provides information on mobility offers for counsellors and clients, on Austria's education system, on transparency instruments, and on various policy measures such as the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

Engine and hub for developing competences

The Austrian Euroguidance centre has always been particularly active in the area of promoting the development of competences. Numerous seminars, workshops, and events such as the conference have been offered to this end for many years now. In addition, the Austrian Euroguidance centre offers an own module – Mobile in Europe with Europass and Euroguidance – within the scope of training courses for educational and career counsellors in Austria. The Austrian Euroguidance centre also organises a cross-border seminar every year together

with selected Euroguidance network partners. This seminar always focuses on a current issue in educational and career counselling. The participants from various countries receive professional inputs from experts and are given an opportunity for exchanging ideas and networking with each other. In 2022, the cross-border seminar was held in Riga on the topic of “Hope in times of uncertainty”. Seven participants from Austria were sent there, and their travel expenses and accommodation were covered.

Information on education systems promotes transparency

Information activities on the subject of the Austrian education system also form part of the tasks of Euroguidance. For this purpose, a dedicated website – www.bildungssystem.at was set up; links to this site can be found on many websites including that of the City of Vienna. In addition, the Austrian Euroguidance centre makes available a great deal of printed material. There is an overview of the Austrian education system in 20 languages, for instance also in Ukrainian. In this way, the Austrian Euroguidance centre makes an important contribution towards the transparency of qualifications.

Collaboration with other networks

The national Lifelong Guidance Forum, in which the Austrian Euroguidance centre actively participates, was established in 2001. To this day, national stakeholders in the area of educational and career counselling exchange views about their activities in this forum, which is coordinated by the school psychology and educational counselling department of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research and usually hosted by the OeAD / Euroguidance. So, already early on, this has promoted a joint holistic perspective for the development of lifelong guidance in Austria. The Austrian Euroguidance centre works closely together with other EU networks such as Europass, EPALE, Euraxess, ENIC-NARIC, and Eurodesk. Annual networking meetings are held by these EU networks so as to create synergies in reaching target groups. The exchange of ideas amongst experts is also promoted.

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller has been head of the unit “Erasmus+ Adult Education and Transversal Matters” since 2007 and is the deputy director of the Erasmus+ programme carried out by the OeAD. After earning a doctorate in political science and history at the University of Vienna, she started her career as a training assistant and then a marketing assistant at a software company before joining OeAD-GmbH in 1994.

Contact:
carin.daniel-ramirez-schiller@oead.at

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Opening of the Euroguidance Conference 2022 by Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller

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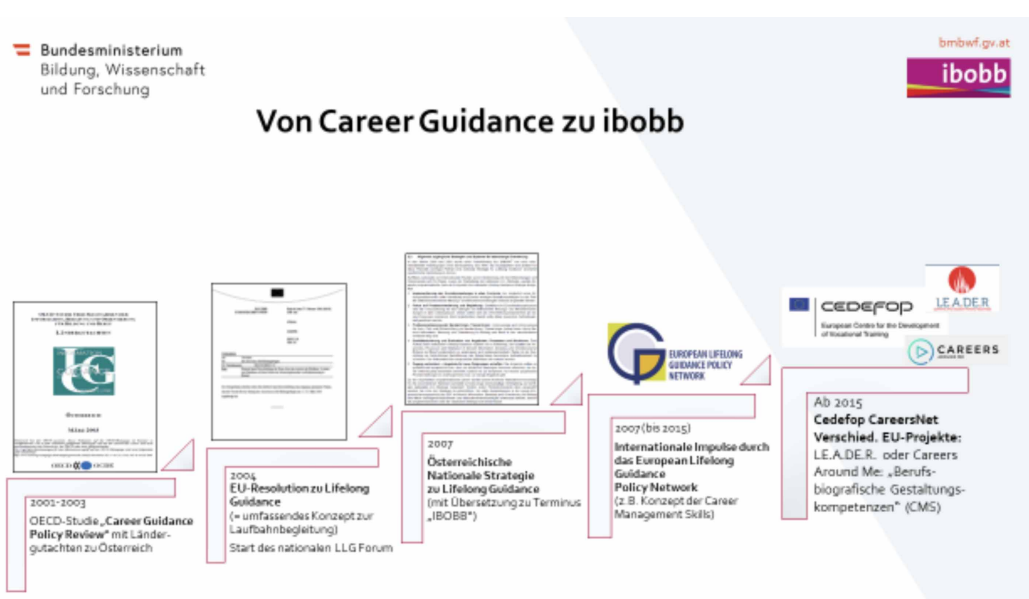
Andrea Fraundorfer
Evelin Langenecker

Lifelong Guidance in Austria – what is the current situation? (Translation from German)

We are living in times in which there is a greater need than ever for orientation and counselling in the area of education, qualifications, and professional careers. More than twenty years ago, Austria embarked on an intensive process regarding how to handle the issues of guidance.

The internationally used term “guidance” expresses that which is understood in Austria to encompass information, counselling, and orientation for education and careers (called “ibobb” in Austria). The EU resolution on lifelong guidance in 2004 and the Austrian strategy for lifelong guidance in 2007 already helped to establish this concept. Since then, there has been a great deal of international impetus from the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) that have also promoted the definition of so-called “career management skills”. From 2015 onwards, various EU projects such as the “LEADER project” and the recent “Careers Around Me Erasmus+ project” (www.careersproject.eu) have been dedicated to the development of a framework concept for career management skills. What can be described well as “career management skills” in adult education is referred to as “education and career choice competences” (or “career structuring competences”) in initial education. The term “career management skills” is used internationally.

However, competences are much more than just skills; in addition to knowledge and abilities, they include perspectives and attitudes as well as application know-how. These competences, which enable one to make individually suitable choices for one’s own education and career trajectory, are gradually developed during one’s educational path. This happens primarily by examining one’s own personality, individual interests, and abilities, as well as the current world of work, potential educational paths, and personal options. Developing research, evaluation, and decision-making competences also forms part of this. People require these competences throughout their entire lives. Educational and career-choice competences are increasingly being regarded as life (orientation) competences, because the need amongst (young) people for life orientation is also increasing in an ever-complex world. In this context, the education system is called upon to provide an appropriate setting in which young people can acquire these competences. Only in this way can incorrect or unsuitable education and career choices be avoided and dropping out of education be prevented.



Presentation © Evelin Langenecker

School-based guidance is a highly dynamic field. The stakeholders who are active in that area (education and career teachers, education and career coordinators, as well as school and education counsellors) are faced with a great number of challenges. At present, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research is focusing on topics such as the professionalisation of teachers and counsellors, improvements in the quality of education and career guidance instruction, and ibobb measures, the implementation of the new curriculum for grades 7 and 8, the interdisciplinary topic of education, career, and life orientation, as well as the further development of scientifically based online instruments. The latter help with entering the education and career orientation process in grade 7, while also assisting those in grades 11 to 13 who are about to finish school in making their higher education and career choices in a knowledgeable manner. The goal is to let education and career orientation become a continuous process in order to ultimately make individually suitable decisions regarding educational paths possible.

To help achieve this objective, there is a tradition of strong collaboration in Austria between the area of education and social partners as well as other providers of information, counselling services, and orientational instruments. Here, too, the aim is to improve the previous level of exchange of information and experiences, and to make the offers as appropriate as possible so as to utilise synergies in the area of education and counselling.

Educational and career information, advice, and guidance is becoming increasingly important, especially in times of crises-related developments in European labour markets. On the one hand, we can observe major staff shortages in many sectors in Austria, while on the other hand, there are developments in the area of “new work” (new modes of working) and “new jobs”. Digitalisation and automation are the drivers of the global as well as domestic labour market developments; new professions and increasing requirements for employees are the consequences. In addition, it can be seen – particularly in the case of

Evelin Langenecker and Andrea Fraundorfer are responsible for education and career orientation including school and education counselling in the department of school psychology and school medicine services of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research.

Contact:
andrea.fraundorfer@bmbwf.gv.at
evelin.langenecker@bmbwf.gv.at



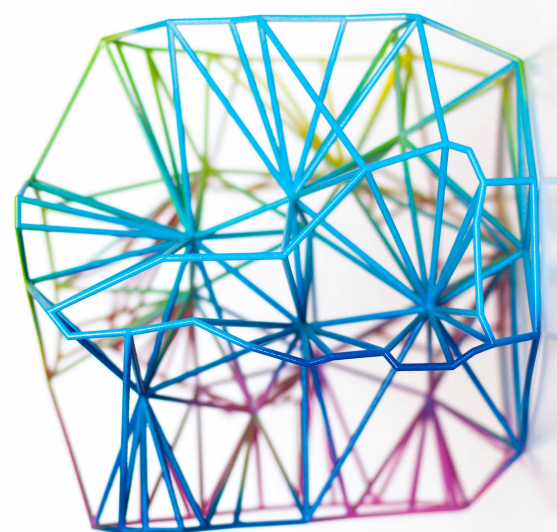
Presentation Evelin Langenecker at the Euroguidance Conference 2022

younger people – that the importance of work and the current working conditions and working hours are being examined in an increasingly critical manner. The desire for a life-work-train balance is greater than ever, as is the desire to work from home, which was tried and tested with positive results during the pandemic. One can also assume that the so-called discontinuous occupational biographies will increase, while the typical occupational biographies – in which a person performs the same occupation at the same company for 45 years – will decrease. In future, reorientation and new orientation processes will occur more frequently after initial training and the first few years in a profession, while changing jobs and renewed phases of training or retraining will increase. The desire for more time off in between as well as a good compatibility between one's profession and private or family life and goals can currently be observed more widely.

Guidance for all age groups is not only important to facilitate good planning of education and career paths in addition to accompanying those in a phase of transition in a suitable manner. It also requires venues at which searches take place together into what work means to us in the 21st century and whether gainful employment also makes sense and leads to job satisfaction. In the same way, the issues of improving one's health and decreasing stresses at the workplace must also be looked into, as is currently happening for the education system. We need to strive towards collective solutions for the constructive handling of the densification of time and tasks for some as well as the precarious employment of others. In addition, the economy and the labour market should not only demand competences and performance from workers in a one-sided manner; in future, they should also provide working conditions in which performance, meaningfulness, and a contribution towards

the sustainability of society, the economy, and jobs can all be achieved to the same degree. There is a reason why a discussion about green jobs and sustainable economies is taking place at a European level. Lifelong guidance must therefore also examine the question as to how guidance counselling can address the rapid societal and economic changes while also satisfactorily answering questions relating to meaningful work and a successful (professional) life. Suitable concepts and implementational practices are required for this and must be developed together.

Lastly, at this point, a word of thanks should be expressed for the OeAD. The OeAD, as the Austrian Euroguidance Center, is an extremely important partner in the area of guidance, because it makes significant contributions towards the professionalisation of counsellors, towards exchanging ideas, towards networking amongst domestic players, towards the further development of the guidance discussion, and towards the dissemination of European expertise. The staging of the annual Euroguidance conference, in particular, is a regular highlight that promotes the discussion about guidance and also drives forward domestic developments in the area of guidance.



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Cynthia Harrison

Digital developments in lifelong guidance

I congratulate the Austrian Euroguidance Centre for organizing the November (2022) event, and its choice of focus on **Online Guidance – Building Relationships in Digital Settings**. I am glad to share some of our work on the topic.

With the service disruptions at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rush to acquire more digital know-how and move online, we saw difficulty in finding space for building relationships in changed communication contexts. So, your event theme is pertinent, and timely as an associated event (with the **main regional event** also hosted by a Euroguidance centre but in Czech Republic, on 30 November) during the **Global Careers Month** (GMC) 8 Nov. to 13 Dec. GCM was an activity of the Inter-agency Career Guidance Working Group of 7 partner organisations, including Cedefop, European Commission, ETF, ILO, OECD, UNESCO and World Bank.

Cedefop in Lifelong Guidance (LLG)

As one of the EU's decentralised agencies supporting the European Commission in policy implementation, Cedefop promotes policies and carries out work on VET, skills, and qualifications, within the context of EU policy, policies and practices that bridge the world of Education and Training (E&T) and the world of work, including supporting career development through work on LLG for over 2 decades.

Cedefop integrates external experts and communities in networks such as CareersNet (CN), selected as independent, volunteer experts in LLG and career development. (The Austria CN core expert is Wolfgang Bliem, and alternate is Eva Baloch-Kaloianov.) Euroguidance and Cedefop also cooperate in different ways. Among other activities, peer exchanges and system critique, the CareersNet experts generously contribute material and analysis for the **Cedefop-Inventory** of LLG systems and practices (updating in 2023) as a tool to monitor progress in key policy areas in LLG systems such as career information and ICT.

ICT in LLG

Reference frameworks aid in taking a systemic perspective, to check where progress is needed to improve services and strengthen systems. Seeing LLG provisions in a country as a system is a way of viewing services and activities in a holistic and coherent way (Kettunen, et al, 2023) even if on the ground coordination and linkages are not evenly developed.

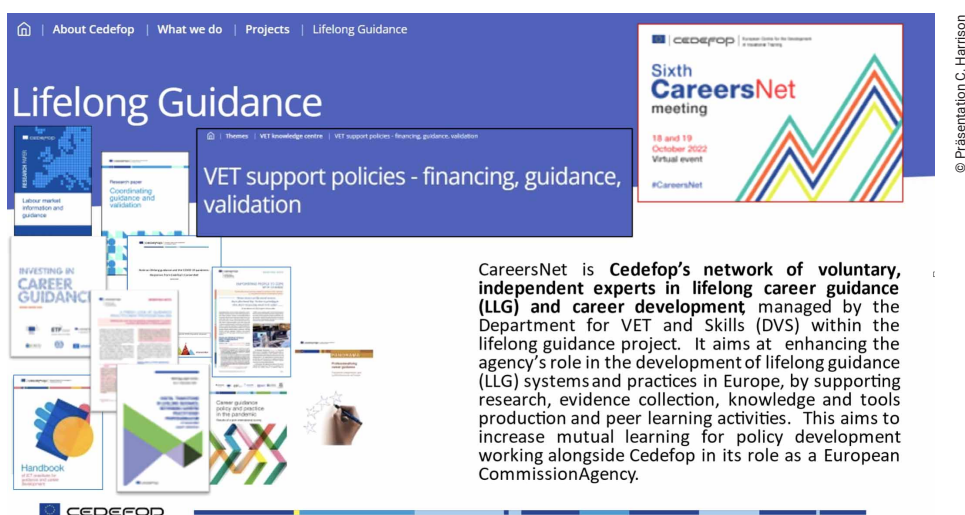


FIGURE 1: Lifelong guidance project at Cedefop

The **18 Guidelines** for policy and systems development for lifelong guidance (ELGPN, 2015) are well known as reference points across sectors – education, training, youth, labour market and civil society. These tools aim to improve career related experiences of the public and strengthen service professionalisation.

CareersNet is engaged in identifying and proposing where the guidelines need updating, reflecting on changes in EU policies and societies, guidance research, and national developments.

Guideline 9, a transversal policy element, explains that ICT is able to help support a user-centred or public service approach, more accessible and relevant in light of changed communications behaviour. In 2015, it was described as the products, infrastructure, and electronic content that enhance policy and systems development for LLG and delivery of LLG services, resources, and tools. ICT is not only seen as a channel for delivery of online counselling and as an alternative to face-to-face approaches that suit client needs and preferences, but in terms of other roles and as an agent of change. It is logical to see ICT integrated with the LLG system, rather than as something separate.

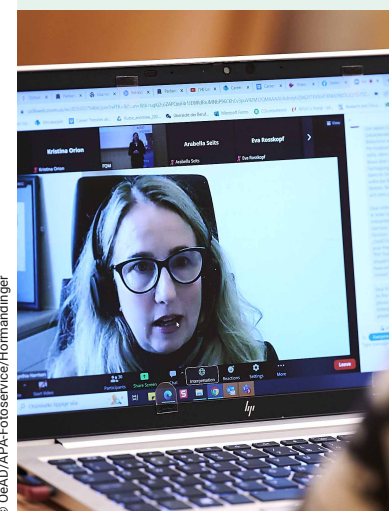
ICT serves as an administrative tool and supports evidence collection, critical for quality assurance. It can enable collaboration, help build relationships – relating to the event theme - not only between career practitioners and guidance users, but a network of relationships to support the end users.

Perspective is important in ICT and LLG

Identifying perspectives is key – service users or learners, career practitioner types, tasks, roles (counsellor, advisor, specialist), service directors or managers, researchers, system developers, policymakers. The benefits, roles, or views on ICT, depend on the perspectives considered, the context in relation to the guidance system. The design of quality interactive services, resources, and tools are dependent on client needs, their use of ICT, and competency level – all of which feeds back into service improvement. IT accessibility is key (e.g., easy to read text, colours, videos, design quality, sign language interpretation, and technical specifications).

Cynthia M. Harrison (Villalba) manages the Lifelong guidance project at Cedefop – the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, working closely with a team of experts in validation of informal and non-formal learning and financing adult learning within the VET support policy area, at the Department for VET and Skills. Her role includes coordination of CareersNet, Cedefop's network of independent experts in lifelong guidance and career learning, as well as management of the Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices.

Contact:
cynthia.harrison-villalba@cedefop.europa.eu



Online Keynote by C. Harrison at the 2022 Euroguidance Conference

Cedefop work – LMI and ICT practices for career development

Cedefop studied labour market information (LMI) integration and guidance, on effective use of technology, quality of provisions and tools for empowering users' job search in the 2018 **Handbook of ICT practices for career development**. It showcased 25 innovative services or platforms (e.g., Europass) at the time that could potentially be transferred to other settings. They were analyzed according to policy objectives and issues addressed: career management skills (CMS), quality assurance, raising skills and qualifications, mid and late careers, supporting groups with complex barriers. An **online decision-making tool** was developed for policy-makers on adoption of IT practices.

Analysis reviewed platforms with real-time LMI, job search engines, personalized advice, blended counseling, user profiling, diagnosis tools, social media utilization, information storage and E-portfolios. Recommendations focused on innovation strategy, evidence and impact, user-focus, feedback, and stakeholder involvement. Since 2018 much has changed but the recommendations remain relevant and shed light on current innovations.

With the availability of new generation chat bots, integrated platforms, more shifts are on the horizon and Cedefop is taking note.

Digital transitions

The collection of 15 papers **Digital transitions in lifelong guidance: rethinking careers practitioner professionalism** authored by Cedefop, CareersNet experts and colleagues was published in 2021 along with a policy Briefing note, (Figure 3) on the topic of professionalising services, developed at the pandemic onset based on the **2020 network meeting**.

The collection contains 4 groups of papers with views on intersecting themes:

Group 1 topics: qualifications, credentials, and standards for practice. Topics include digital skills of practitioners in awarding qualifications or recognition of skills and competencies, awarding digital badges and the IT support systems; and competence frameworks, profiles, and training requirements.

Group 2 topics: the swift expansion of technology on innovation, on the level of integration of ICT in the field, self-directed learners, and innovation in career support tools (e.g., chatbots); the attitudes and skills of practitioners, confidence in using technology, need for more competence in analyzing labor market statistics and big data; and quality frameworks in the blended digital context.

Group 3 topics: viewed as growing in importance during the period – **accompanying competencies and skills and the leap to online intervention and services**; social and emotional learning and skills, online training to promote geographic mobility activity and intercultural understanding; practitioners' strategic competence in the LLG ecosystem, in ubiquitous multi-professional networks, in services transformed by ICT; challenges in the interpretation and management of complex LMI.

FIGURE 2:
Handbook of ICT
and LMI practices
for career develop-
ment



© Präsentation C. Harrison

Group 4 topics: focus on **shaping the future of LLG** with roll out of new initiatives, concepts, training, learning opportunities to close gaps in CPD, including a training programme underpinned by research on evolving conceptions of social media use, and competence in career services; other content addressed new portals and job profiles, AI courses for practitioners.

Final observations derived from views in the papers suggest ways forward:

- 1 The LLG system in digital transition requires **attention to initial and continuing training of practitioners, competence development, and peer learning**. The rapid **pace of change** needs a steady focus on quality services for enabling smooth pathways for service users.
- 2 Evidence indicates that the pandemic was a catalyst to **enhance and reinforce standards** including on practitioners' competencies, provider capacities.
- 3 The reinforcement of key **skills and competencies may be necessary for practitioners to effectively address complex needs of clients**, changing service demand, and the transforming technological, governance and provider landscape.

The collection points to a re-evaluation of novel arrangements involving new **stakeholders, partnerships, networks, cooperation formats for improved coordination** but new tools are needed.



Career guidance will continue evolving influenced by myriad factors. Chances exist for the community to shape changes, and with more disruption ahead. Accelerated digital transformations may be felt by career practitioners arising from the demands made on the professionals such as the high level of interpersonal communication skills, CPD and need to adjust theories, methods, and evidence with LM changes.

Predicting change ahead is key but also reassuring clients on continuity, on stability and planning meaningful careers. Adopting practices based on aims, evidence, ethical and quality standards, will remain essential.

FIGURE 3: Digital transitions collection of working papers and Briefing note

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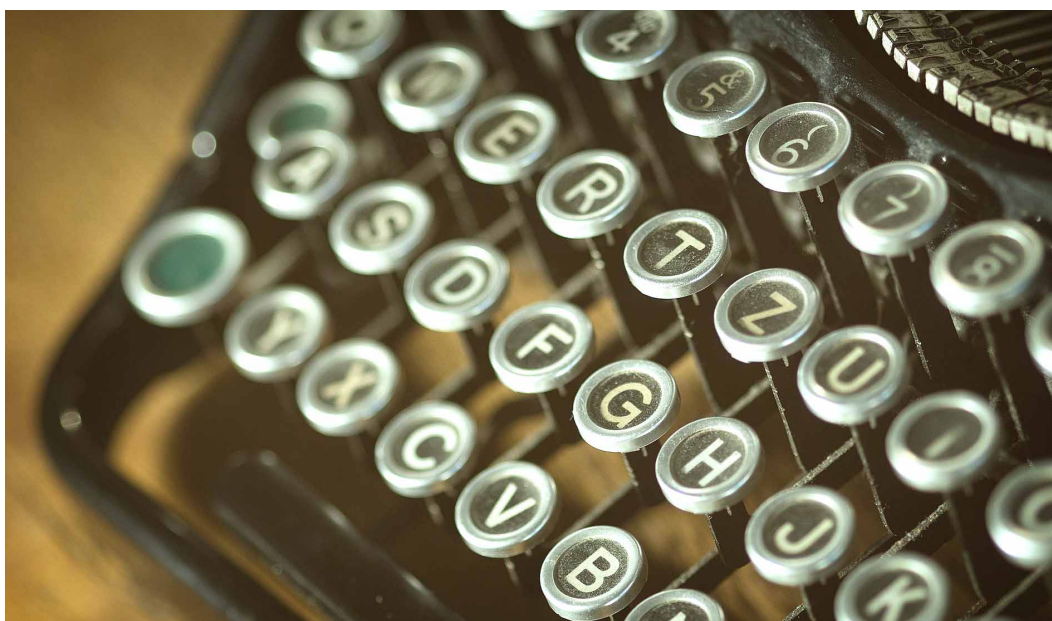
Stefan Kühne
Gerhard Hintenberger

Building relationships in online guidance

(Translation from German)

Relationship is a central impact factor in every counselling environment. It is regarded as one of the best-researched general impact factors and is generally considered to have a greater impact on a positive outcome than special intervention techniques (see, for instance, Wampold & Imel, 2015). The question now poses itself as to what extent written communication – which needs to make do without non-verbal and para-verbal accompanying phenomena – can suffice to build good relationship during counselling. Clients initially make comparisons with their everyday experiences in order to gauge the quality of relationships in a professional setting. Since digital communication media now occupy a central position in private communication, it can only be concluded that experiences from this area will also contribute towards assessing the interaction in relationships in a professional context. In the same way, similar categories such as good rapport, respect, empathy, attentive listening, the ability to convey potential solutions, etc. play an important role (Gahleitner & Preschl, 2016; Hermer & Röhrle, 2008; Hintenberger, 2021).

These quality criteria are not primarily coupled with the presence of various sensory channels. It could even be that a reduction of some sensory channels and the associated audio-visual anonymity leads to a faster opening up. Döring (2000) describes this as a dialectic between physical absence and sensory presence, physical distance and psychological proximity (p. 367). This type of setting primarily benefits clients with potentially embarrassing problems or those who experience difficulty in leaving the regulation of the closeness of the relationship to their respective communicative counterparts. They can thus literally “save face” (Schutze, 2007). This assessment is also supported by research results. Knaevelsrud et al. (2016) and Berger (2017) interpret the available studies such that clients perceive written and digital counselling and therapeutic environments as pleasant and personal, and that the working relationship can be assessed in a similar manner to that of face-to-face interactions.



Online guidance has been conducted in written form in German-speaking Europe for a long time now. With the advent of the pandemic, however, there were some shifts in this area. Over the last few years, counselling formats have become somewhat differentiated on the whole, with the traditional channels of e-mails and chats now being supplemented by messenger services, video chats, audio messages in addition to other media such as podcasts, video blogs, apps, social networks, virtual reality, and games. There are thus many digital spaces available in which education and career counselling can take place, and this is achieved in different ways and settings: in written form, text-based, in video format, in audio format, automated, as a stand-alone service, or in a blended counselling format, etc. The choice of the setting in itself is already an intervention that must occur in a professionally structured manner and that requires expertise on the various communication channels (Hintenberger, 2021). In summary, it can be stated that the communication channels themselves are not the deciding factor, but rather our skills, expertise, and competence in implementing a communicative experience to the satisfaction of our clients.

Consequently, counselling chats make use of an interaction-oriented style of writing in order to compensate for the disadvantages of communicating in writing (Hintenberger & Engels, in print):

- Chunks (dividing up texts into smaller parts) for an active structuring of a change in speaker serve to facilitate a fluid dialogue.
- Economisation strategies such as using only lower case, leaving out punctuation, neglecting to correct grammatical errors, making use of abbreviations and acronyms, etc.
- Elements to simulate oral communication such as the use of filler words, hesitation sounds, the use of a specific word order as occurs during regular oral conversation, the written equivalent of the flow of words, etc.
- The use of emojis, smileys, etc. to express sentiments and comment on statements.
- Expressions commenting on actions so as to communicate thoughts, actions, and reactions.

Gerhard Hintenberger is a psychotherapist and supervisor as well as a lecturer at the University for Continuing Education Krems. Together with Stefan Kühne, he is the publisher of www.e-beratungsjournal.net. An up-to-date list of publications is available at: www.praxis-hintenberger.at

Stefan Kühne is an adult educator and lecturer for Digital Social Work and Online Guidance as well as the Chair of "Die Forschungs-greisslerei". Together with Gerhard Hintenberger, he is the publisher of www.e-beratungsjournal.net. An up-to-date list of publications is available at: www.stefankuehne.net

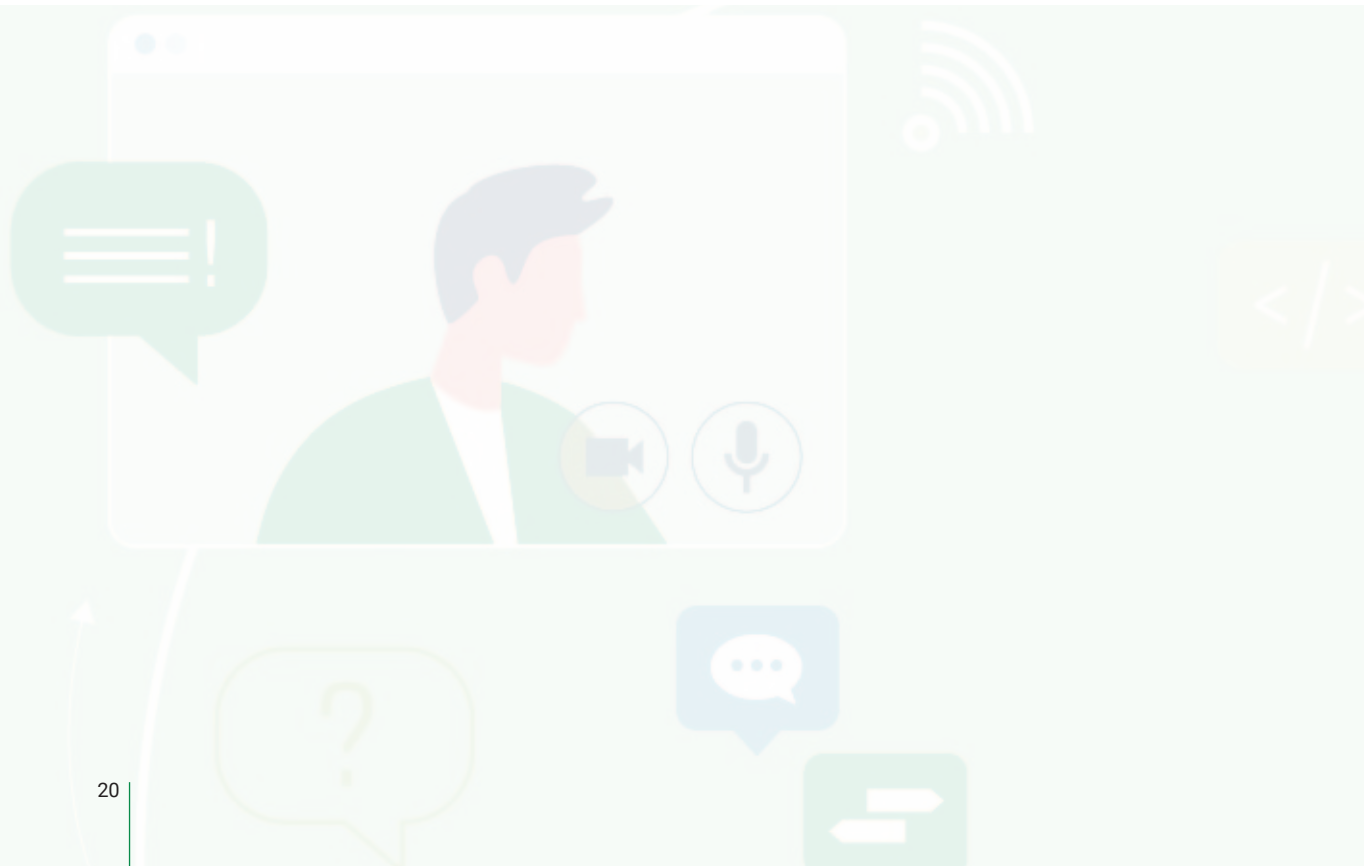
Contact:
office@stefankuehne.net



Keynote by Stefan Kühne at the Euroguidance Conference 2022

In the case of video-based formats, a certain level of expertise in the use of this communication channel is also required in order to be able to structure the counselling relationship in a satisfactory manner. Even when the possibility of a synchronised exchange of information is given thanks to video and audio transmissions and resembles counselling in person, certain particularities need to be considered. In this setting, too, certain manners of framing, insufficient lighting, or poor audio quality can quickly lead to a reduction in sensory channels. Eye contact is only indirectly possible. We cannot look into each other's eyes, but only into the camera (camera-to-camera). We also become tired more quickly because we constantly need to put in additional effort (2D to 3D, audio quality, video quality, etc.). In addition, we are confronted with unusual basic parameters, for instance when we always see ourselves in the picture, which results in a triangulation in a situation that is meant to be dyadic. And, lastly, it is not possible to create an entirely safe place, because the transmission channel and the client's particular surroundings cannot be controlled. The main advantage of this communication channel, besides not having to actually be present at the same place, is the use of media tools such as screen-sharing, text chatting, whiteboards, etc. that are appropriate for the situation and are usually integrated into video conferencing systems.

It is not only since 2015/2016 that people are coming to Austria as a result of migration flows. Last year, the influx of refugees fleeing from Russia's internationally illegal war of aggression on Ukraine reached a new peak. Many of these people are traumatised, and traumatised people also come to seek advice from education and career counsellors. For this reason, it is necessary to be informed about how best to assist traumatised people within the context of online guidance. Core protective factors for the prevention of post-traumatic symptoms include stable situations with regard to attachment, relationships, and integration, while the primary goal in working with traumatised people is to develop or restore basic trust and basic safety. Traumatized people need a great number of alternative positive experiences with people who understand them and enable them to have safe discrete experiences. Only in this way can there be any new attachment security (Gahleitner, Hintenberger & Pammer, 2022). Education and career counselling can form a (small) part of this network and can provide a safe professional relationship framework with a thematic focus.



Two potential hazards need to be avoided: engaging too strongly and deeply with the crisis-related topic or ignoring the topic altogether. However, it is possible in education and career counselling to express one's own reaction empathically and authentically, while simultaneously providing core services within the scope of educational and career counselling. If necessary, people can also be referred to specialised guidance centres. This could, for example, take the following form in an advisory e-mail:

I have just been reading all that you have gone through recently. And, to be honest, I don't quite know what to write, because I'm actually at a loss for words. I can only imagine what all of this means to you. If you need help, I can gladly give you the name of a specialised advisory centre. And you have turned to us for assistance with a potential change in career. It isn't easy to find the right words to change to this new topic. But I will try my best as follows ...

Digital contact means personal contact. Reading an e-mail may feel different to going to an appointment in person or attending a video discussion. The fact is, however, that in all these instances, there is a communicative and relationship-forming event between people that is not only achieved under different framework conditions but is also influenced by them.

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5

Barbara Oberwasserlechner
Karin Okonkwo-Klampfer

Digital Educational Counselling Austria – Highlights (Translation from German by EPALE Austria)

Context of Online Educational Counselling Austria

Online educational counselling already has a long tradition in Austria, as it has been offered text-based in the form of e-mail and scheduled chat via a counselling platform for twelve years. Initially developed on a regional basis, the service was gradually expanded throughout Austria from 2013 onwards.

In parallel, other digital counselling formats, such as video-based counselling, have also been offered in the Austrian regional networks of federal provinces. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the diversification of digital counselling, such as in group counselling. The resulting range of services is an enrichment for clients, but also poses challenges for the organisations offering them: What does a client-oriented blended guidance concept look like? Will funding be adequately increased? How does this counselling diversity affect the counsellors' work organisation? What competences do counsellors need to acquire?

This text briefly summarises the experiences in the project "Online Educational Counselling Austria" and in the pilot project on "Messenger Counselling" and sheds light on the interactions between the counselling context and the counselling relationship.

Online Educational Counselling Austria is one of several sub-projects of Educational Counselling Austria, albeit the only supra-regional counselling service. The framework conditions are complex: Educational Counselling Austria has a decentralised structure and is organised in each of the provinces as a counselling network with its own project funding proposal. Online Educational Counselling Austria and its further development takes place cooperatively, is centrally coordinated and is project-technically part of a project funding proposal in which various supra-regional projects are bundled.

Online counselling is carried out by counsellors of the provincial networks and is thus a service of the provincial networks. On the other hand, the purchase and ongoing adaptation of the counselling software including first level support, the operation of the central entry portal for clients, agreements on the implementation of the offer as well as quality assurance and further development are central services of the supraregional project, which is coordinated by the Viennese Adult Education Centres (Wiener Volkshochschulen).



K. Okonkwo-Klampfer and B. Oberwasserlechner at the Euroguidance Conference 2022

All projects are funded by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the European Social Fund. The individual guidance networks have different financial resources, as co-financing by the respective federal province is required.

Project Online Educational Counselling Austria

Clients can reach the Online Educational Counselling Service via the website www.bildungsberatung-online.at. In order to use the text-based e-mail or scheduled chat counselling, they have to choose a user name and a password and can voluntarily provide counselling-relevant information about themselves and their counselling needs. Counsellors provide counselling via www.beranet.de; the information provided in advance enables them to prepare for counselling in a particularly data-secure counselling space. Clients, however, now often find this access to be high-threshold.

Online Educational Counselling Austria has been particularly successful in ensuring Austria-wide standards. Through the joint reflection of practice in supervisions, on team days and in webinars, an open learning space has emerged in which a common understanding of guidance has been developed.

Pilot Project Messenger Counselling in the Regional Network Vienna

Messenger counselling is particularly low-threshold and enables clients to receive counselling via their everyday communication channels. In autumn 2021, the Vienna Adult Education Centres, as a network partner of educational guidance in Vienna¹, conducted a two-month pilot phase on messenger guidance. The website chat and two messaging apps (WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger) were tested. The website chat was discontinued after the pilot phase for reasons of resources. Counsellors answer all enquiries in the message centre of the Userlike software, regardless of the messenger channel used.

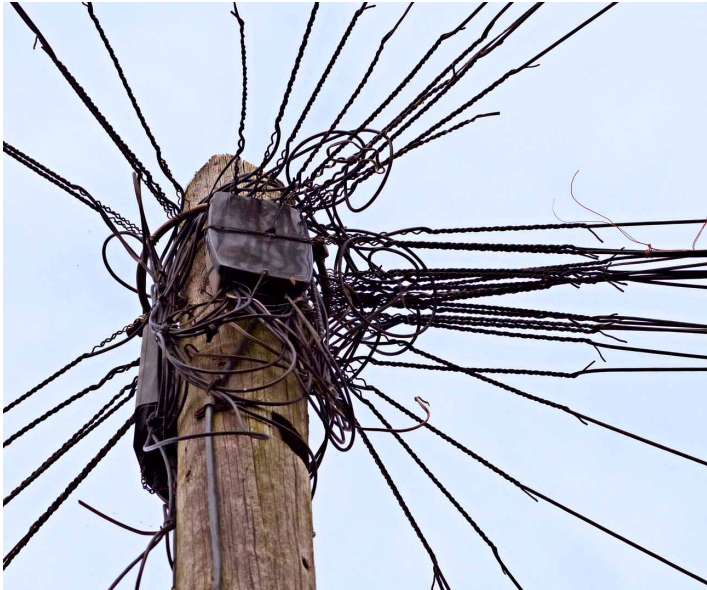
The choice of channels for the implementation depends on the user behaviour of the desired target groups as well as the time and financial resources of the counselling institutions. The messenger counselling is intended to address people with few technical or financial resources, but not to push them to use a channel due to a lack of alternatives. In the two-month pilot phase in autumn 2021, the messenger counsellors served 80 clients. The majority of the requests came via WhatsApp. The combination of online outreach counselling and messenger counselling has led to increased demand.

Barbara Oberwasserlechner is content coordinator of the project Online Educational Counselling Austria. She is an experienced counsellor with various face-to-face and online educational counselling formats. She is currently gaining initial experience with messenger guidance.

Karin Okonkwo-Klampfer is head of the Online Educational Counselling Austria project. She is a project manager with a passion for digitalisation and supports the introduction and use of digital technologies in adult education.

Contact:
barbara.oberwasserlechner@vhs.at
karin.okonkwo-klampfer@vhs.at

¹ Funded by the European Social Fund, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Vienna Employee Promotion Fund (WAFF).



Pixabay

Communication via the Userlike software enables the use of the different messenger channels, including WhatsApp, in compliance with data protection regulations. For this purpose, the WhatsApp Business API is used, an interface that was created especially for companies. In the settings of one's own Userlike company account, there is also the option to restrict the collection of personal data.

Effect of context on the counselling relationship

A central prerequisite for a safe, confidential counselling space is clarity about the counselling context. Knowing the people involved, knowing the framework conditions such as accessibility, possible contents of the counselling and its limits contribute significantly to a successful counselling relationship for clients, but also for counsellors.

It is important for clients to know who is counselling them. In messenger counselling, the name of the counsellor is not visible. Counsellors must therefore introduce themselves briefly. An attractive option is to send an audio post that takes up little space and can be called up again and again by clients, thus losing the disadvantage of the volatility of spoken language.

Clear communication of availability and response times helps to build trust. If counsellors do not react for unknown reasons, this can trigger unpleasant experiences for clients or lead to the termination of counselling.

Furthermore, because of their low-threshold nature, messenger apps invite spontaneous enquiries - such as from the waiting room of a doctor's office or during a break at work. Clients thus remain strongly connected to their current environment, which is unknown to the counsellors, and to their respective roles, such as patient or employee. A yet to be developed methodology for messenger counselling must also take into account the spontaneity and the variable setting in order to be able to optimally use the advantages of the messenger.

Also for counsellors, a lack of assessment of the current context of the clients and their concerns can create uncertainty and reduce their ability to get in touch with clients. Supervision can play an important role in broadening the methodological scope.

Another aspect of context in messenger counselling is the history log of the counselling on the client's device. For the first time, all messages can be arranged in multimedia form on one surface, comparable to an endless scroll, related to each other and read at any time. It has to be explored when which media can be used most optimally with which effect and how they should be designed.

Experience so far shows that messenger counselling works well when the questions are as few and brief as possible and are closely oriented to the request, and information is presented briefly and clearly. Messenger counselling has proven to be an exciting counselling format with a lot of potential for development, which should be expanded and further developed in exchange with other counselling services.

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Margit Rammo
Kristina Orion

Digital solutions to support guidance in Estonia

Introduction of institutions

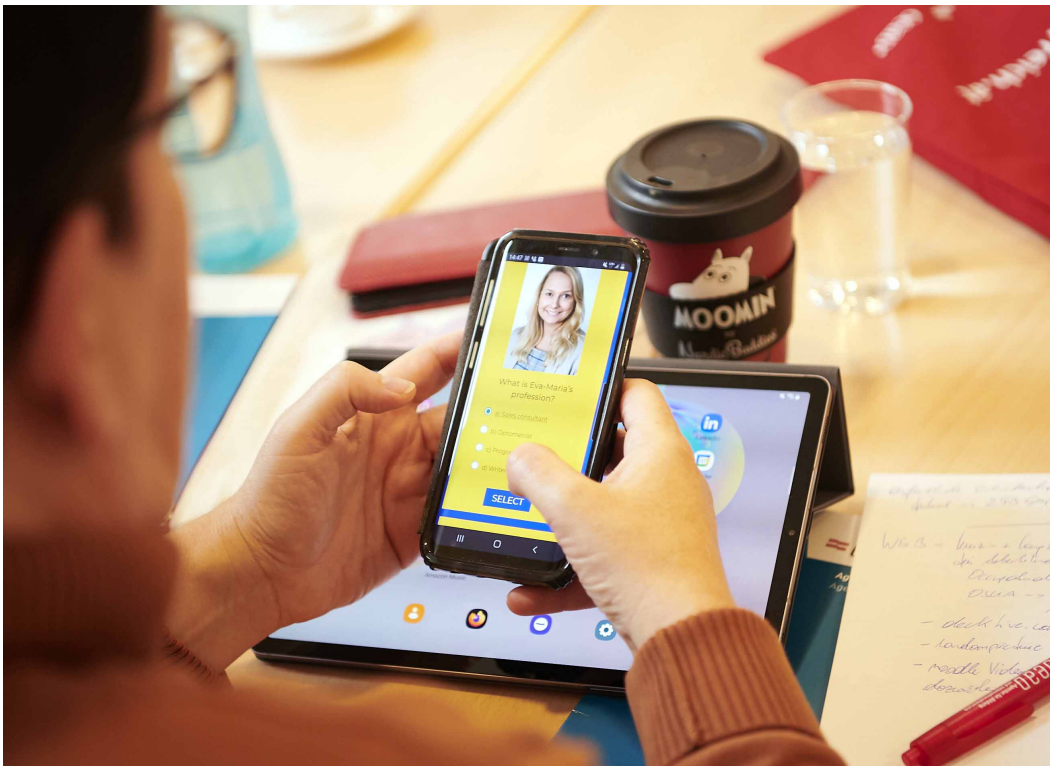
The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (abbreviated as EUIF; in Estonian, Eesti Töötukassa) acts as a public employment service (the PES) and is responsible for the payment of labour market benefits and the provision of active and passive labour market measures, including the career information service and career counselling across the country. Methodological development and support for employees is provided by a team in the central office.

Euroguidance Estonia is the National Resource Centre for Guidance, which focuses on competence development of career guidance professionals, providing a range of services to Estonians and professionals abroad. As a member of the Euroguidance Network, the centre provides support in the areas of learning mobility and career development within education and employment. The centre operates as part of the national Agency for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

Estonian e-story and strategic view

Estonia has a rich history of digital solutions and e-governance, dating back 20 years with a step-by-step approach. The country has invested heavily in digital services due to factors such as its small population, limited budget, and finite manpower. There are several factors that came together in the end – some of them provide the factual context, others depend on more intangible things such as culture and values. Equally important as these fundamental challenges was the fact that Tallinn had been the home of the Soviet Union's cybernetics institute since the 1960s, so some of the required IT talent was already in place. Another factor may very well have been Estonian culture – Estonians are not the most talkative people on earth so, for them, digitalisation would save not just time and money but also the need to interact with people at government offices.

The educational digital revolution of Estonia aims to implement modern digital technology more efficiently and effectively into learning and teaching, to improve the digital skills of the entire population, and to ensure access to a new generation of digital infrastructure. In practice, this means that the digital culture is integrated into the process of learning at all educational levels and in all curricula. Ensuring the technological support of education for management, teachers, and students is a prerequisite for educational innovation inspired by technological innovation.



Experimenting with Estonian online tools at the workshop

The state, for its part, guarantees digital learning resources (e-textbooks and workbooks, open learning materials, etc.) for achieving the goals and learning outcomes set in the curricula of primary, secondary, and vocational schools. This includes ensuring that every student has access to a personal digital device to access the modern digital infrastructure. To achieve this, digital competence assessment and recognition systems are created and implemented.

Finally, Estonia has also adopted a lifelong learning strategy because it understands that the private sector's expectations towards the labour force continue to change. Thus, both state and private sector companies offer a variety of (often free) IT courses for enthusiasts of any age. This provides the opportunity for people to educate themselves and increase their digital skills while making it easier to make the necessary changes in their career.



Margit Rammo has been working in the field of lifelong guidance since 1998 when she was appointed to establish the Estonian resource centre for guidance. She is qualified as Master of Arts in Social Sciences, specialised in Educational Management and focusing at encouragement of innovativeness in educational establishment. During her professional career she has been involved in international guidance cooperation with European Union institutions (European Commission, Cedefop, European Training Foundation, etc.) and European networks (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, CareersNet, Academi, the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe - NICE etc.), but also beyond Europe, e.g. the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy - ICCDPP and The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance – IAEVG. As the Manager of the Estonian Euroguidance centre her role is to inspire innovation in lifelong guidance among the European guidance community - to encourage internationalisation in guidance, and to promote the value of learning mobility abroad.

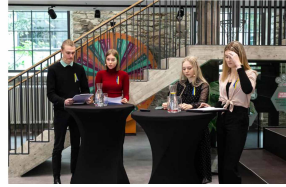
Contact:
margit.rammo@harno.ee
kristina.orion@tootukassa.ee



Kristina Orion and Margit Rammo at the Austrian Euroguidance Conference 2022

Virtual activities to promote career development

- Live events on Facebook
- Creating content for social media
- Virtual career days for students
- Thematic podcasts



Digital solutions and lifelong guidance

The daily work of career guidance practitioners is intertwined with the use of various information and communication technology (ICT) solutions. The use of ICT here is multifaceted: Practitioners are both users and the creators of new values through the use of ICT solutions. The ICT solutions can be broadly divided into the following two groups:

- for service provision, including web pages, databases, educational software, games, social media channels, and e-tests; and
- for internal processes, including documentation management, customer management, feedback solutions, information exchange in cloud-based solutions, and e-learning environments.

In the education sector, the central portal to support individuals' career development is the education portal edu.ee, which gives an overview of learning opportunities and labour market information. Both young people and adults as well as teachers and other professionals access information about the education system and institutions, curricula, certificates, but also occupations, qualifications, and the needs for labour and skills. E-schoolbag is a rich source of digital learning materials for both practitioners and parents to support skills development, including career management skills.

The main thematic website provided by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) is minukarjäär.ee (My career), which recently underwent a thorough overhaul. The aim was to create a website to support independent career planning for both youth and adults. The central idea revolves around different career paths, where the user can choose their role and main career question and easily access trustworthy information and the tools they need. The website includes information about career possibilities, interactive tools, questionnaires, etc. for supporting one's career journey. In addition, a toolbox for career specialists and teachers provides materials, resources, and tools about career development.

E-guidance via e-mail, telephone, and Skype has a long history at the EUIF. Guidance by e-mail and telephone was launched in 2015. Skype guidance was also available, but not heavily utilised. When the the COVID-19 pandemic began, although most of the practitioners had some experience in e-guidance via different channels, additional training seminars for PES practitioners were offered. Service provision was also switched from Skype to Microsoft Teams, which was considered more secure.

There are various ways to make career counselling experience more interactive and educational for clients. The digital tools are not just for virtual counselling, but also for on-site use. In Tallinn, the Interactive Career Centre was opened, where clients can use interactive tools on-site and discover their skills, interests, and different pathways. The aim was to support independent career planning online and, if need be, enable people to get additional information and counselling from career specialists on-site.

Activity #3: mentimeter

What are my 3 take-aways from this session?



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The role of career specialist

The professionalism of Estonian career specialists in recent decades has been developed mainly without specific educational programmes, but by courses offered by various training providers. There is no academic qualification obtainable for the professionals – most have a higher education degree in social or educational sciences (e.g. psychology, economics and business administration, pedagogy, teacher training). However, higher education institutions offer a variety of subjects, specific micro-credentials are the new initiative, and continuous professional training as well as peer coaching are available from national agencies and private providers to ensure the development of the practitioners' professional competencies on the basis of the requirements. Training is also often held in e-learning environments such as Moodle or includes virtual meetings with trainers.

Furthermore, the occupational qualification system, including the occupational qualification standard, the system of awarding occupational qualifications, and the register of professions, is established to ensure the professional development of practitioners in career guidance.

The standard describes occupational activities and provides the competence requirements for a profession and their levels. In practice, the standard is used as a basis for compiling curricula and training programmes that meet the requirements of the labour market; as a basis for competence assessment; to assist employers in describing and introducing occupations, recruiting employees, compiling job descriptions, and defining professional requirements; and to help professionals assess their own skills gaps or for their own career development.

FACE OR FACT?

Can you guess the truth by looking at the face and figuring out the profession of the person?

Interactive game at <https://game.brea-k.eu/en/>



LEVEL 1
○○○○

LEVEL 2
○○○○

LEVEL 3
○○○○○

VICTORY

Great, you guessed correctly! Fridro-lagar works as a sales clerk in a grocery store and does his job really well.

WRONG ANSWER! TRY AGAIN

What is their profession?

- a) Police chaplain
- b) Secretary
- c) Fire chief
- d) Hairdresser

SELECT

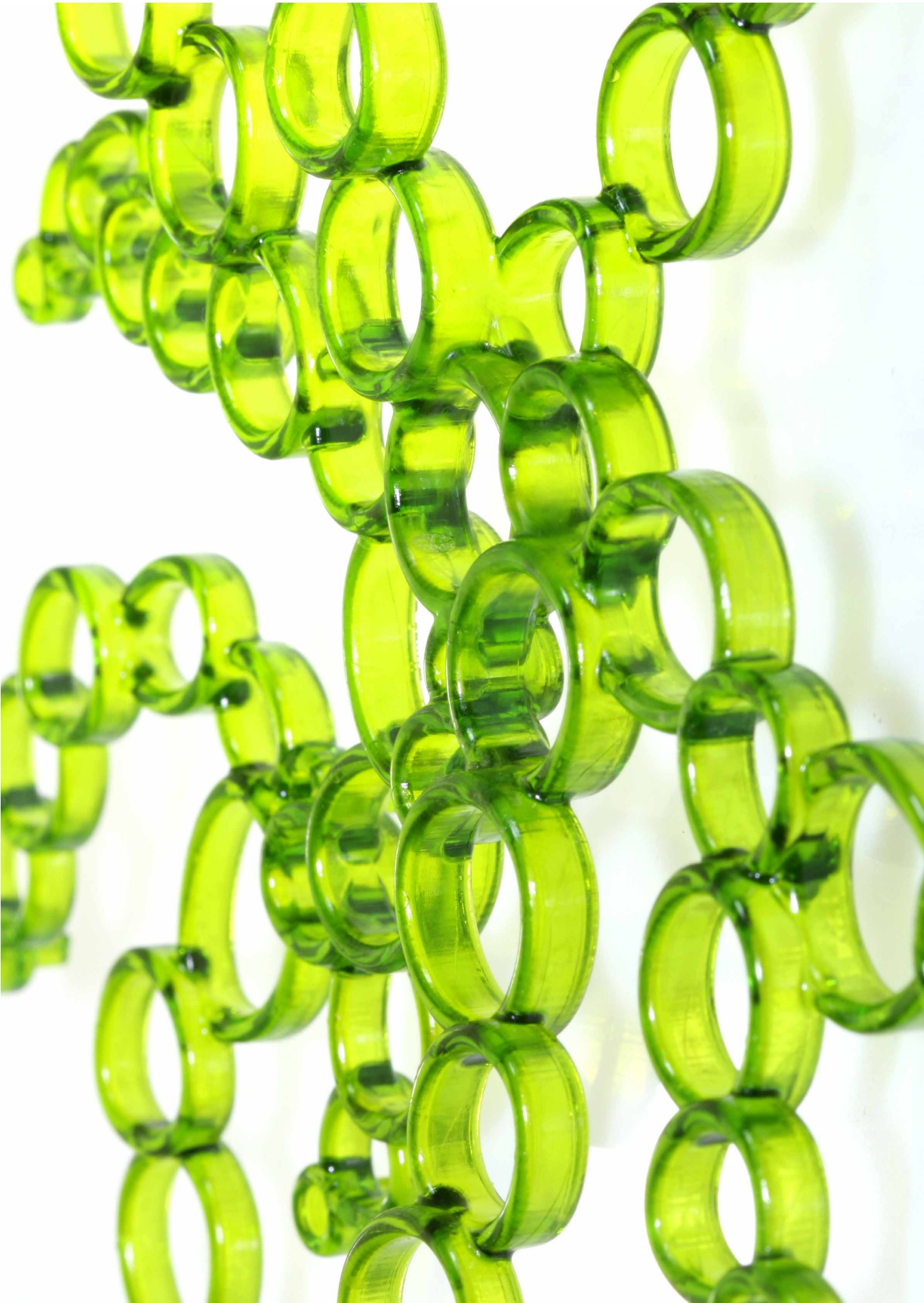
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The professional standard for career specialists describes the occupational activity and competence necessary for practicing career guidance, i.e. skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to work successfully. The current competence-based standard for career specialists is valid at EstQF levels six and seven, equivalent to a bachelor's degree and professional higher education certificate and a master's degree. The main difference between the levels is that in addition to the service provision, the level seven practitioner has more extensive experience and competences at the national or international level, e.g. using new tools, curricula, research, or training.

The outcome of the system of awarding occupational qualifications is a professional certificate, an electronic entry in the register of professions, and a document which certifies the compliance of the applicant's competence with the requirements of the professional standard. In the field of career guidance, the Association of Estonian Career Counsellors has been legally appointed as the awarding body, which is responsible for ensuring impartiality in the process and for setting up a professional qualifications committee. According to the Professions Act, the committee involves stakeholders with an interest in the awarding system: specialists, employers, and unspecified representative employees, trainers, representatives of occupational associations, and, if necessary, client representatives, as well as other interested stakeholders. The register of professions is a state database with information on valid occupational qualifications, professional standards, awarding bodies, and professional certificates.

In conclusion, digitalisation and internationalisation are rapidly evolving areas which affect people, and thus attention is needed in developing the competences of career guidance professionals. To provide practitioners maximum support for their professional development, studies are needed on current and future needs, followed by suitable training opportunities for professionals.



Opportunities and challenges presented by new formats in educational and career guidance

(Translation from German)



BiBer Bildungsberatung

BiBer Bildungsberatung has been assisting inhabitants of the city and province of Salzburg with all questions regarding the choice of suitable further education and training for more than 30 years now, for instance with career (re-)orientation, obtaining educational qualifications, and familiarising themselves with the Austrian educational system, the working world, and funding possibilities.

The counselling is free of charge, objective, and confidential! We focus solely on the interests of the counselees. Our services are aimed at adults and young people between the ages of 15 and 65, with particular attention paid to lower-qualified, economically inactive persons who are not in training, those with impairments, persons who completed none or only part of their education in Austria, as well as those older than fifty. Our objective is to promote the self-competence of our clients so that they are able to make decisions regarding further education and training as well as career choices on their own.

Our counsellors are available in 13 counselling centres throughout the province of Salzburg in addition to reaching out to clients and offering mobile services. They provide advice through individual interviews, at workshops, and in group sessions as well as providing information by telephone, via e-mail, and through lectures. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we also offer online counselling services by means of one-on-one and group video calls. BiBer Bildungsberatung is funded by the European Social Fund, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Province of Salzburg, and the City of Salzburg.

Starting point for BiBer Bildungsberatung during COVID-19 pandemic

Our goal during the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns was to be there for clients affected by the crisis (short-time workers, the unemployed, and jobseekers) and to make our counselling services easily accessible to them as quickly as possible.

Development of new online formats

Virtually from the first day of the first lockdown, staff at BiBer were experimenting with various conferencing tools and sharing the results of the tests with the rest of the team. The fact that BiBer counsellors had previous experience with webinars and live streaming in a group context (researching job trends in 2018 and 2019) proved very helpful.



Development of new video formats for counselling services

The goal was to develop online formats – for individual as well as group situations. For this, the staff underwent intensive training, a concept for one-on-one sessions using video chats was developed, test runs were conducted, and feedback was collected, analysed by the team, and then the counselling services were adapted accordingly.

Challenge for the BiBer team

What made it even more difficult was having to fight internally and also with collaboration and networking partners against the general assumption that existed at the time that only face-to-face on-site counselling is any good. Intensive training and professionalisation in the use of online tools for all staff was a prerequisite for success. We had to become experts – not just users – in the area of counselling via video telephony.

It was to our advantage that due to our mobile and outreach-based counselling services, particularly in more rural areas, we were already very well equipped from a technical perspective with our own laptops, smartphones, mobile Internet access, and so on. Working from home had also been practised as a fixed component of our professional life for many years and was governed by employment policies. Therefore, we were able to continue working well together as a team and push the development despite being in separate physical locations.

Challenges for clients of our counselling services

We also had to do a lot of persuading to convince clients that counselling services provided via video chat are equal in quality to those provided face-to-face and that there were considerable advantages vis-à-vis conventional counselling over the phone. The screen showing further education and training information was visible to both parties and could also be shared. Besides this, our clients did not need to have computers – smartphones were absolutely sufficient.

However, many of our clients also struggled at home with difficult conditions, for instance with children or other members of the same household having to work from home or do remote schooling at the same time. For counselees whose German skills were not good, the online counselling was surprisingly positive, because they were able to read the shared information on their screens at the same time and – as in the case of face-to-face counselling – they were able to make use of gestures and facial expressions to get the message across.



Workshop at the Euroguidance Conference 2022

Christine Bauer-Grechenig has been working at BiBer Bildungsberatung since 2003; she has been the head of the educational and career guidance centre for young people and adults for more than twelve years now, and currently still works in the area of counselling. She is an economist and a trainer in adult education and is active as an expert in quality certification.

Andreas Lutzmann has been a counsellor at BiBer Bildungsberatung since 2010. In addition to providing counselling services in all formats, he is also responsible for study and career choice guidance at BiBer in the 18plus Berufs- und Studienchecker guidance programme. He studied educational sciences and was also involved in the area of youth counselling for many years.

Contact:
c.bauer@biber-salzburg.at



Designing individual online counselling services in ways that reach the target group

A prerequisite was advertising the services for video chat counselling on social media, regional TV channels, printed media, and so forth under the slogan of “online counselling – as easy and personal as meeting in person.” We invested a lot of time into the design of the process – from the initial first contact with people seeking advice to the actual utilisation of the counselling services. The most important aspect was to make our counselling services as easily accessible as possible for clients and to equip them with the digital skills required to even be in a position to contemplate the use of video-based counselling services.

We assisted our clients by means of written guidelines on the website as well as by having counsellors guide them through the “installation and setup” process over the phone and also through test calls via the video chat link before the actual appointments. In this way, our clients were able to become acquainted with using the tool so that they could concentrate fully on the personal matter at hand. The online appointment booking platform that was implemented in the autumn of 2020 represents a further improvement as it allowed potential clients to make their own appointments around the clock.

Design of online group formats (webinars, workshops, and lectures)

Another important issue during the pandemic was to continue providing group counselling services. Group counselling for study and career guidance for prospective graduates of academic and vocational secondary schools was carried out interactively via Zoom from April 2020 onwards with the help of various methods and subsequent feedback questionnaires.

It always worked best when each person had their own workspace (at home). However, during periods in which the pupils were at school, but we as third parties were not allowed to enter the school, the working conditions were much more difficult, because the pupils often had to wear face masks and sit in front of screens in their classroom. At the same time, the video function was sometimes deactivated so that only black tiles were visible, and the reaction of participants could only be ascertained after direct questioning.

We would also like to mention the attempt made to conduct an online question session on selected topics such as career and study choices, as well as funding, in which we wanted to provide informative input and discussion. There was also the possibility to ask questions in advance, to anonymously make use of the chat during the session, or to participate anonymously. However, this format proved not to be very popular at all. Perhaps it would help in future to reach out to the target group even better, or to include existing groups and networks to a greater degree here.



On the trail of vocational trends – a visit to Eurofunk Kappacher

Past experiences and future outlook

With the help of the newly developed video telephony counselling, we succeeded – from 2021 onwards – in regaining the high level of counselling contact figures that we had in the years before the pandemic.

Between March 2020 and the end of 2022, BiBer conducted more than 800 video telephony counselling sessions as one-on-one sessions, with an above-average outreach towards disadvantaged target groups through the online service. At present, around 10 per cent of one-on-one consultations still take place via video telephony; usually there are regional disadvantages here, or work-related or family-related challenges to overcome, which makes distance counselling practical and necessary in these instances. In the case of group formats, the demand is once again almost exclusively for face-to-face sessions, and only informative lectures are still held online.

Both we ourselves and clients of our counselling services have increased digital competences, and online communication is now part of our everyday (professional) life. As a result of the new online counselling services, we are now able to attend to the individual needs of our counsees in a more flexible manner, while also enabling access to counselling services, educational opportunities, and the working world.

REFERENCES

www.biber-salzburg.at

Accessible work for all



Accessible Work 4 All is an Erasmus+ project, which was implemented in Italy, German, Poland and Austria between 2019 and 2022. The project promotes equality, non-discrimination and diversity, by providing information on working rights in accessible or barrier-free digital formats.

It was an honour to be asked to present the project **Accessible Work 4 All** during a workshop at the Euroguidance Conference and 30-year celebration of the Euroguidance Network, which took place in Vienna on 16 November 2022.

I work for **equalizent Vienna** and we support deaf and hard of hearing people looking for work, further education and training. We also support hearing people in the educational and social sectors who are looking for work and who are interested in learning Sign Language. My function at equalizent is to manage international projects, which I do with a lot of enjoyment and commitment.

The project – Accessible Work 4 All – is about our rights – specifically, working rights. Our animated videos use a combination of Sign Language and plain language to explain different aspects of **working rights for Deaf workers and employees**. This might include questions like: What kind of contract do I have? How much holiday am I entitled to? If I get pregnant, can I be sacked? Can I enrol on a further education

course as an employee? All these questions and many more besides come to mind when people think about their working rights, which are often taken for granted. However, this information is often hidden behind complicated language constructs, foreign loan words and jargon, rather than using accessible formats, Sign Language or plain language, which can be easily understood.

Our workshop started with some basics, learning how to fingerspell in Austrian Sign Language and sharing some facts and figures around the Deaf community in Austria, Sign Language and Sign Language users in Austria and worldwide.

The Austrian Deaf community consists of approximately 10.000 people. **Austrian Sign Language** was constitutionally recognised in 2005, but implementation has been slow and an Austrian Sign Language curriculum has still not been introduced in schools. This means many deaf children grow up without a language model at home and much of the instruction they receive in school is without sign. Sign Language is distinct and different from written language so deaf primary school pupils are already effectively learning a foreign language (written German), often without an accomplished signer instructing them. In later life, this frequently means that information in the form of complex written texts are a barrier to full self-determined participation in all aspects of life but particularly with regard to work, which is a person's right

(SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth). By providing all information in Sign Language, our aim at Accessible Work 4 All was to empower young deaf job seekers in their employment relationships, facilitating greater self-determination and less reliance on communication assistance. Our project had three main areas of activity:

- 1 Research and analysis of the current situation,
- 2 Development of accessible explanatory videos,
- 3 followed by developing and testing of a digital training package and handbook.

We started with surveys in Sign Language, the results of which were presented in graphics, in a detailed written report (in 5 languages) and of course, in Sign Languages (Austrian, German, Polish, Italian and International Sign).

The responses from our survey participants enabled us to focus on the needs of deaf job seekers regarding accessible information on working rights. We developed a series of explanatory videos (60 in total) about topics ranging from home office to collective contracts, early retirement to further education and the workplace. The videos are animated, following the characters of Max and Julia on a short story through a particular area of focus, such as writing a letter of application for example. A Sign Language moderator helps the animated characters by explaining in simple steps what Max/Julia can/cannot, should/should not do when writing a letter of application. The videos are accompanied by texts, which have been drafted in plain (easy-to-read) language. Moreover, there is a lexicon for any particularly difficult terminology – the sign is shown on video with a graphic icon plus the written word.

While our primary aim is to empower, we are also a training institute, therefore we incorporated our video materials into a blended learning package to be used in training at equalizent, as well as by our associated partners in Austria. This applies to our partners in Italy, Poland and

Germany too. All materials are freely available online and can be downloaded as PDFs. As time was limited during the Euroguidance workshop, we were unable to practice concrete scenarios. However, the materials have been designed with flexibility in mind and with an eye to online training since most of our project was implemented during the worst lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic

During the Euroguidance workshop, it was my task to introduce our project, the background and motivation, as well as our finished materials and tools. At the same time, I tried to provide participants with an insight into why the project is so necessary, and why access to information is such a vital aspect of ensuring participation and self-determination for people with disabilities. Our workshop participants, many of whom had had little or no experience working with and beside deaf people to date, had the opportunity to ask questions. We also collected common intuitive signs (e.g. swimming, eating, telephoning, rocking a baby, writing and more), while discussing tips and tricks for effective communication if you do not have a shared language (e.g. using pencil and paper, writing on a mobile phone, ways to catch someone's attention and much more).

Presenting a two and a half-year project in 90 minutes is a daunting task. I hope our workshop participants enjoyed their time with equalizent and Accessible Work 4 All, and that our materials can be used in other settings, regardless of formal, non-formal or counselling. And if just one workshop participant decides to learn Sign Language as a result, then I have done a good job.

If you would like to know more about equalizent Vienna and our Erasmus+ projects, go to: <https://equalizent.com/en/products/european-projects>
For more information about Accessible Work 4 All, go to: <https://accessiblework4all.eu/>

Joanna Kinberger joined equalizent Schulungs- und Beratungs GmbH in Vienna, Austria in 2017 as EU Project Manager. equalizent was founded in 2004 and has four main areas of work: Deafness, Hearing Impairment, Sign Language and Diversity Management. Until 2017, Joanna worked in development cooperation as speaker for inclusion at Diakonie/Brot für die Welt.

Contact:
erasmusplus@equalizent.com



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Workshop at the Austrian Euroguidance Conference 2022

The impact of eLearning and online skills self-assessment for literacy learners

Literacy involves listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday technology to communicate and handle information. But it includes more than the technical skills of communications: it also has personal, social and economic dimensions (NALA, 2012).

We use our literacy skills every day and unmet literacy needs can have a huge impact on people's health and wellbeing, accessing work and lifelong learning, and being able to participate fully in family life and society. The most recent adult literacy survey (CSO, 2013) showed that:

- One in six (18%) Irish adults (aged 16 to 65) struggle with reading and understanding everyday text. For example, reading a bus timetable or understanding medicine instructions.
- One in four Irish adults (25%) has difficulties using maths in everyday life. For example, basic addition, working out a bill or calculating percentages.

Recent research has identified that social embarrassment/stigma is the most critical barrier that prevents people from accessing the supports they need (Government of Ireland, 2021). Alongside these psychological barriers of fear, shame and low confidence, there are financial barriers, negative perceptions of capabilities due to age, and access issues.

At the **National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)**, we work to ensure that adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. We develop and support creative and innovative projects to meet the needs of adult literacy learners and to overcome the barriers to engagement with lifelong learning.



I saw the ad and said I am going to make a change and learn to read and write. It was the best thing I ever did."

Linda, Laois



Leading the way in online learning

Since 2000, NALA has been using television, radio, print, telephones and the internet to provide educational opportunities to people who want to improve their literacy. Successful radio and tv distance learning programmes encouraged NALA to move towards higher tech solutions to try and address the issue of access and participation. We wanted to use technology so that we could provide learners with unlimited access to learning and at times which suited their lives.

In 2008, NALA launched "Write On!", a free online learning platform to facilitate literacy development and certification for adult learners. There were two key features of "Write On" that learners had access to:

- The Recognition of Prior Learning Tool, which allowed learners to obtain qualifications for what they had previously learned at Level 2 and Level 3 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.
- Online learning materials and tutor support to improve their skills at levels 1, 2, 3, 4.

NALA became the largest provider of online learning at Levels 2 and 3 in Ireland with over 30,000 learners completed at least one course and 23,000 completed more than one course.

Technological advances, new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and a desire to improve the learner experience and engage with our learners on a deeper level led to the redesign and development of our online platform. In 2018, we began a journey from "Write On" to our new eLearning platform, **Learn with NALA**. We utilised Brightspace, a Learning Management System that creates personalised learning at scale. We placed the adult learner at the centre of our design decisions by following principles such as Universal Design for Learning, Plain English guidelines, and ensuring accessibility by integrating assistive technology.

Learners can now choose from a range of over 40 free adult learning courses. They can study online or work with a tutor on the phone; deciding what, where and how they want to learn. We now have just over 10,000 users on the platform with 1,500 unique log ins every month, and over 2,500 learners achieving certification on an annual basis.

Erasmus+ Check in, Take Off Project (CITO)

NALA's interest in innovative and technical solutions to increase access and participation in lifelong learning continued through the **Check-In Take-Off (CITO)**, an Erasmus+ EU Policy Experimentation project. This project aimed to develop an online experience that supports adults with unmet literacy, numeracy, and digital needs to explore their learning goals, recognise their existing skills and identify what skills they could develop.

Based in Ireland, **Ailis Mardon-Egan** is an experienced eLearning Engagement Officer for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). Ailis is passionate about NALA's vision; where adult literacy is a valued right, where everyone can develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and where individuals can take part fully in society. As part of the Check In, Take Off (CITO) project, Ailis has coordinated the design and development of an online self-assessment web application, the CITO Skills Checker, to help motivate learners to take the next step and discover relevant learning opportunities. Outside of the office, Ailis enjoys rugby coaching, rowing, and BBQing.

Contact:
amardonegan@nala.ie

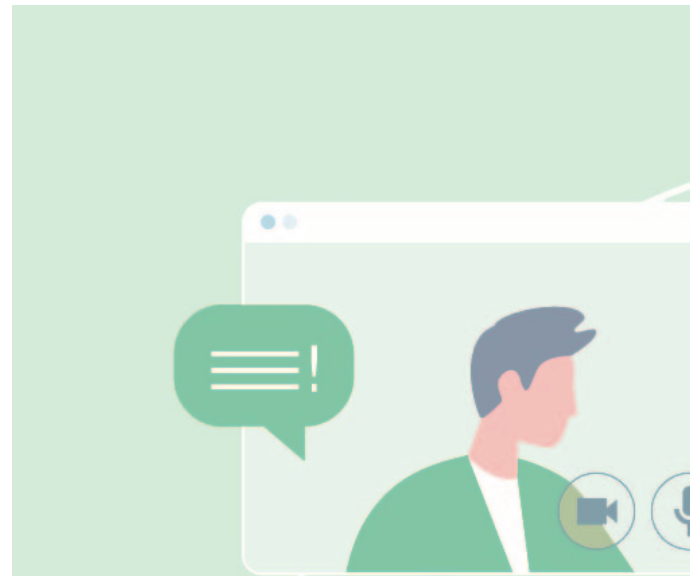


Workshop at the Austrian Euroguidance Conference 2022

The project developed and tested the **CITO Skills Checker**. The Skills Checker is an easy-to-use and free online self-assessment tool, which will help learners check where they are and get direction on where to go to next. Learners can explore their skill level in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy using real-world task based self-assessments. Relevant online and local learning opportunities are suggested so that learners can go on to improve their skills, learn new ones and achieve their learning goals.

CITO Project research (Bates Evoy, S. et al, 2021) found that the Skills Checker increased a user's confidence around using technology, was helpful in self-identification of skills levels and supports identification of future education and job options. Other key findings included:

- 76.4% found the Skills checker very easy or easy to use.
- 53.5% experienced an increased interest in taking up a learning opportunity in the future.
- 88.8% would recommend the Skills Checker to a friend.



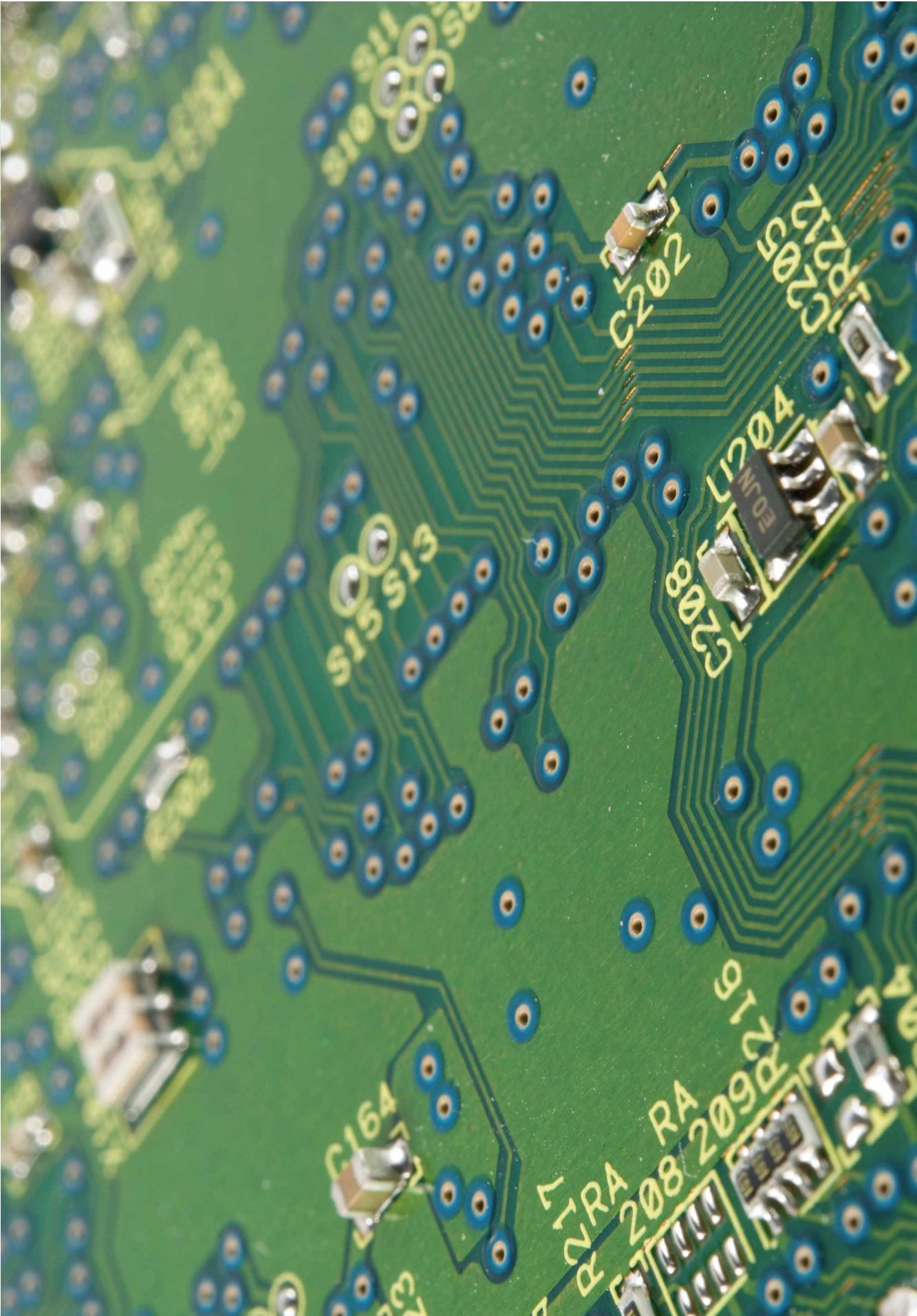
The CITO project created a prototype that was scalable and available for organisations in Europe to adapt and localise to their own culture and context. An **open source repository** with supporting documentation was created to empower organisations to initiate this adaptation process. The Skills Checker tool was translated and developed into English, Maltese and Norwegian. NALA recently adapted and launched the **Skills Checker tool**.

Where to next?

Year on year growth in engagement and progression on Learn with NALA and the initial impact of the Skills Checker illustrates how technology can help reduce the barriers to access and support greater participation in lifelong learning. Learners are encouraged to choose when they want to learn, where, with no time pressure and with confidentiality assured. They have been provided with low-tech solutions that help to bridge the digital divide and give learners increased confidence in their digital literacy. With recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (A.I) and the continuing developments in assistive technology, we are excited to see how Learn with NALA and the Skills Checker can evolve to support adult learners with unmet literacy needs and break down further access and participation barriers.

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- **Government of Ireland** (2021) Adult literacy for life: A 10-year adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy strategy. Government of Ireland. Available at: https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/f/120607/x/133e8d1481/15607_all_strategy_web.pdf (Accessed: February 18, 2023).
- **NALA** (2012). Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work: Dublin: NALA.



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annex 1

Programme



euroguidance österreich

Euroguidance Conference 2022

ONLINE-GUIDANCE

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN DIGITAL SETTINGS

16. NOVEMBER 2022 | KARDINAL KÖNIG HAUS
KARDINAL-KÖNIG-PLATZ 3 | 1130 VIENNA | AUSTRIA

Euroguidance - Conference 2022

Due to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, the need for accessible career guidance has increased. Across Europe, guidance services have moved to the online space and there has been increased investment in the further development of online portals and distance counselling.

Cynthia Harrison, Cedefop, will outline the digital developments in lifelong guidance, the training needs of counsellors and the role of lifelong guidance in post-pandemic recovery through reskilling and upskilling.

Building a counselling relationship is an important factor for successful online counselling. The lecture by **Stefan Kühne** will shed light on possibilities of relationship building and discuss opportunities and limitations in the digital setting. What can online counsellors in educational and career guidance offer in terms of relationship and where are the limits?

Examples from Austria and Estonia show what developments guidance services have taken. **Barbara Oberwasserlechner** and **Karin Okonkwo Klampfer** (Bildungsberatung in Wien) will present Online Educational Guidance Austria, **Margit Rammo**

(Euroguidance Estonia and Education and Youth Board of Estonia) and **Kristina Orion** (Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund) will give an insight into the latest developments in the field of online guidance in Estonia.

In the afternoon, **four parallel workshops** will offer the opportunity to deepen the discussion and to get to know innovative approaches in the field of guidance.

This year's hybrid Euroguidance conference is part of the "**Global Careers Month**", a joint effort of Cedefop, the European Commission, ETF, ILO, OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank. The plenary lectures in the morning will be streamed for the European audience.

We invite you to network with colleagues from Austria and Europe at the Euroguidance Conference 2022! Throughout the event, a **project exhibition** and an **Erasmus+ Corner** will provide an opportunity to get to know projects and develop project ideas.

Furthermore, we will celebrate the **30th anniversary of the Euroguidance Network** and **25 years of Euroguidance Austria**.

Click here to [register](#).

#Online-Guidance | #EuroguidanceConference2022 | #EuroguidanceFachtagung2022



PROGRAMME (as of 16 November 2022)

08:30 - 09:00	Registration
09:00 - 09:10	Welcome Ernst Gesslbauer, OeAD / Department Europe, Education, Youth
09:10 - 09:20	Euroguidance: 25 years of European Dimension of Lifelong Guidance in Austria (in German) Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller, OeAD / Department Europe, Education, Youth
09:20 – 09:30	Lifelong Guidance in Austria – Where do we stand? (in German) Evelin Langenecker, Ministry of Education, Science and Research

SETTING THE SCENE

09:30 - 10:15	Key Note Digital developments in lifelong guidance Cynthia Harrison, Cedefop
10:15 - 10:45	Coffee break and project exhibition
10:45 - 11:30	Key Note Building relationships in online counselling (in German) Stefan Kühne, Die Forschungsgreisslerei / institut: wissenschaft.online.beratung

IMPULSES FROM AUSTRIA AND ESTONIA

11:30 - 12:00	Online Educational Guidance Austria (in German) Barbara Oberwasserlechner and Karin Okonkwo Klampfer, Bildungsberatung in Wien
12:00 - 12:30	Digital solutions to support guidance in Estonia Margit Rammo, Euroguidance Estonia Education and Youth Board of Estonia Kristina Orion, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund
12:30 – 12:45	Introduction to workshops
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15:30	Thematic work in four parallel workshops
15:30 – 16:00	Wrap-up of workshops in Mini-Plena
16:00 – 17:00	Celebrating 30 Years of Euroguidance

Facilitator: Michael Bauer-Leeb, WEITSICHT – büro für zukunftsfähige wirtschaft

WORKSHOPS (14:00 – 15:30)

Workshop 1: Chancen und Herausforderungen neuer Formate der Bildungs- und Berufsberatung (in German)

Die Pandemie hat die Bildungs- und Berufsberatung vor gänzlich neue Rahmenbedingungen und Voraussetzungen gestellt. Was war die Rolle der Bildungsberatung, und welche Unterstützung konnte den Ratsuchenden gegeben werden? Wie wurden die Zielgruppen erreicht?
Die BiBer Bildungsberatung gibt Einblick in Online-Formate der Beratung von persönlicher Einzelberatung über Gruppenworkshops der Studien- und Berufswahl bis zur Erkundung von Berufstrends durch Livestreams.

Die Teilnehmenden sind herzlich eingeladen zum Info- und Erfahrungsaustausch zu den Formaten, die sich vor und während der Pandemie bewährt haben und auch in Zukunft wichtig sein könnten.

Expertinnen und Experten:

Christine Bauer-Grechenig, BiBer Bildungsberatung Salzburg
Andreas Lutzmann, BiBer Bildungsberatung Salzburg

Moderation:

Arabella Seits, OeAD / Euroguidance

Workshop 2: Accessible Work for All (in German)

„Accessible Work for All“ ist ein Erasmus+ Projekt, das sich für Gleichberechtigung, Nicht-Diskriminierung und Vielfalt einsetzt. Wie? Durch das Anbieten von Informationen über Arbeit und Arbeitsrecht in einem leicht zugänglichen oder barrierefreien Format. Das heißt, dass gehörlose Jobsuchende Unterstützung und Informationen online in ihrer Erstsprache – Gebärdensprache – finden können.

In diesem Workshop erfahren Sie mehr über das Projekt und über Gehörlosigkeit. Neben dem Fingeralphabet in der österreichischen Gebärdensprache lernen Sie wie unsere Videos und Materialien in Unterricht und Beratung eingesetzt werden können und Sie erfahren auch Tipps und Tricks für Kommunikation mit Gehörlosen.

Expertin:

Joanna Kinberger, equalizent Schulungs- und Beratungs GmbH Wien

Moderation:

Susanne Krischanitz, OeAD / Euroguidance

Workshop 3: Digital solutions in career guidance in Estonia (in English)

We have lived most of the past year studying and working from a distance, digital services have played a crucial role. The daily work of the career guidance practitioners in Estonia is intertwined with the use of various ICT solutions, which are multi-faceted - practitioners are both ICT users and the creators of new approaches.

The aim of this interactive workshop is to give an insight into how career development is ensured by a lifelong guidance system in Estonia and inspire participants with ways of digital working. Presenters will introduce most meaningful digital solutions designed for Estonian guidance professionals and their clients.

Both presenters are active members of the Association of Estonian Career Counsellors, belong to the professional qualification committee and are members of the National Career Guidance Forum.

Experts:

Margit Rammo, Euroguidance Estonia / Education and Youth Board of Estonia
Kristina Orion, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund

Facilitator:

Alexandra Enzi, OeAD / Europass

Workshop 4: The impact of eLearning and online skills self-assessment for literacy learners (in English)

The [National Adult Literacy Agency \(NALA\)](#) is an Irish charity committed to ensuring that people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can fully take part in society. This workshop will showcase [Learn with NALA](#), an eLearning platform for adult literacy learners and practitioners, as well as introduce the [Erasmus+ online Skills Checker tool](#).

NALA's research has shown that eLearning reduces barriers to access and supports greater participation in skills development and lifelong learning. This workshop will outline the impact an online environment can have on adult literacy learners to:

- 1) support the exploration of their learning goals
- 2) self-assess and recognise their existing skills
- 3) develop new skills

The workshop seeks to gather insights and encourages interaction with conference participants who might see the relevance of online provision in their settings and the challenging COVID context.

Expert:

Ailis Mardon-Egan, National Adult Literacy Agency NALA, Ireland

Facilitator:

Eva Baloch-Kaloianov, OeAD / Euroguidance

