



ACADEMIA SLOVENIA 2026

**LIFELONG GUIDANCE IN  
SLOVENIA**

Employment Service of Slovenia, Euroguidance Slovenia



The booklet Academia Slovenia 2026: 'Lifelong guidance in Slovenia' has been prepared by Academia Slovenia 2026 participants from Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Euroguidance Slovenia.

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## Introduction

Academia is a network that offers training opportunities for guidance practitioners in European countries. This offers the participants a chance to get to know the guidance system and guidance practices in another European country.

**Academia Slovenia 2026: 'Lifelong Guidance in Slovenia'** will take place 20-23 April in Ljubljana and will focus on the guidance activities in Slovenia to provide a learning mobility experience in multicultural environment and international networking opportunities. The program will introduce Slovenian guidance system, Slovenian labour market and Employment Service of Slovenia as well as guidance in different settings.

The participating guidance practitioners will:

- gain overview of lifelong guidance and service provision for different target groups in Slovenia;
- be able to understand learning in a multicultural environment;
- learn from peers on the guidance topics with exchange of practices;
- be able to practice professional language and participate in discussions to exchange guidance practices among themselves and other experts;
- widen the international professional network.

Host organisation is the Employment Service of Slovenia, National Vocational Information and Counselling Centre (Euroguidance Slovenia), that has been hosting Academia study visits as well as sending Slovenian guidance practitioners to participate in Academia in other European countries since 2008.

Euroguidance Slovenia will be contributing to implementation of Euroguidance's main objective that is competence development of the guidance community on the European dimension of lifelong guidance.

## Participating guidance practitioners

The participating guidance practitioners were asked to prepare a description of the method, practice or initiative from their daily practice according to the following guidelines: title of the method, practice or initiative, expected outcomes, target group, description of the method, practice or initiative, links for further information.

This Academia Slovenia booklet includes the collection of these practices from Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland to support exchange of good guidance practices among European guidance practitioners.

### DENMARK

Anette Holm, VUC Lyngby

### ESTONIA

Jaana Oro, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund

Monika Sutrop, Tallinn University of Technology

### FRANCE

Cassandre Fanget, CIO Annonay

### GERMANY

Anima Lauxtermann, Agentur für Arbeit Osnabrück

### NORWAY

Maria Gundersen, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

### SPAIN

Ana Isabel Santos Martínez, IES CENCIBEL SECONDARY SCHOOL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

### SWEDEN

Vanja Litendahl, Vägledning & Kompetens Mölndal

### SWITZERLAND

Anna Leuenberger, BIZ Kanton Bern

## Good practice: Denmark

Anette Holm, VUC Lyngby, Denmark

### FLEXIBLE EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

#### **Presentation**

VUC Lyngby is an education centre for adults and young people and one of approximately 30 adult education centers (VUCs) in Denmark, where adults can add to their formal education and skills. We are situated 15 km north of Copenhagen near public transportation to Copenhagen city centre. I have been working for the school since it was founded in 2003. First as a high-school teacher in Italian and business economics and since 2011 also as student counsellor, currently full-time.

The formal aim of VUCs is to provide academic qualifications to enable adults to improve or supplement their general knowledge and skills. At VUCs it is possible to combine basic and high-school levels to meet the individual student's academic needs. Many adult students attend a VUC as their pre-university stepping-stone to university enrollment. We also have a department for young high school students who prepare for University College. They finish high school in two years.

#### **A wide range of subjects and levels**

At VUC Lyngby we teach single subject courses from very basic levels to A-level. In addition, we offer courses for dyslectic students that may be combined with other studies. Many of our subjects may be studied as distance learning as well as in traditional classroom settings, and we have long experience in including computers in our approach to teaching. We offer Danish as a second language at several levels.

#### **A diverse student population**

At VUC Lyngby we have a student population of about 500 students. Our student body profile is highly diverse, covering a broad age span, many different ethnic origins, students with social and mental health challenges as well as students residing outside Denmark.

## **Flexible education for professional athletes**

In Denmark it is an objective that all young people continue some kind of education after their compulsory schooling. This calls for flexible solutions. I would like to present an initiative of my school which we call Flexible education for professional athletes in which you can combine a busy sports career with high-school single subject classes.

### **Target groups**

- Young professional or semi-professional athletes, mainly football and ice hockey players but also handball, golf, tennis, badminton and curling players as well as a skateboarder who individually contact the school and register for the programme. Some athletes have professional contracts with foreign clubs and therefore reside outside Denmark. Often, they are assigned to us by an NGO called 4Players. Others are dropouts from traditional high schools who could not make their sport fit with long school days and lots of homework in that kind of much less flexible system.
- Entire youth teams of the best football clubs. Our teachers teach in the club combined with e-learning. At the moment we are cooperating with two clubs.

### **Concept**

The high school of single subjects is a very flexible education. For example, you can choose to take a break or take less demanding subjects if you have a busy season, or the opposite if you get injured and have more time for studying, you can choose more demanding subjects. We try to organize the courses to make education fit with training, competitions and events. Often with our e-learning concept.

Before each semester the student counsellor helps the athlete programming the subjects all organized over six months into a schedule. We help the athlete choose the right class as well as the right level. If the student has already finished some exams at an ordinary high-school (dropouts) it is possible to obtain credit (recognition) for those exams, which means that education is shortened.

### **E-learning**

VUC Lyngby offers almost all subjects both as e-learning and as in-person teaching. This means that the athlete can take subjects without having to attend school. Common to all e-learning subjects is that one must submit at least one assignment per week.

When taking subjects as e-learning, it is important that the athlete is an experienced IT user and has access to a computer and the internet.

### **Help and guidance throughout the education**

I am the student counsellor of the professional athletes attending the flexible programme. I register them and help with structuring the subjects. I am their go-to person of the school being the connecting link to the administration office too. My guidance is mainly very practical.

As a student counsellor one of my most important goals is to help the athletes complete their studies. I contact them if they don't attend the classes or don't submit the assignments within the deadline and try to make a plan for the recuperation in collaboration with teachers, club representatives etc.

I work as a connecting link between the student (often including parents) his teachers and school administration. I am also the person who is in contact with the representatives of the clubs and the Danish Football Federation, e.g. when the player is selected to a national match to assure the study activity while the student is away with the team. Sometimes we organize virtual exams abroad e.g. in the local embassy if a student playing in a foreign club is prevented from coming to Lyngby, Denmark.

The contact with both the players and all the other interested parties is mostly by email or phone, with some exceptions when we plan the semester and register the athletes for new classes. In these situations, we meet in my office in the school.

### **Students with special needs**

If a student suspects that he has dyslexia he can be tested at VUC Lyngby. If the test shows dyslexia, we can ask for a grant to electronic aid from the Ministry of Education, e.g. a so-called App-writer to be installed on the student's computer and access to NOTA, a national electronic library where books can be read to the student. Personal instruction by a professional teacher of dyslexia can also be provided for free.

My job as a counsellor is to facilitate enrollment to the test, to make the requirement of aid to the Ministry, to arrange for the instruction at the school and finally to help provide special conditions at the exams. Rarely, compared to the counselling work I do with other kinds of students coming to my office, I give psychological or social counselling to the athletes. I think the clubs assist in those manners.

## **Further education**

In Denmark we have a guidance service which concerns the choice of higher education and paths in working life called "Studievalg Danmark" (Study and Career Guidance Denmark). If necessary, I refer the students to make an appointment for a guidance session with a counsellor at the Centre for the capital region.

I also help them seeking information on the national guidance portal, which offers ICT-based information and guidance. This portal is a very helpful guide to every kind of education in the country.

In Denmark there are many rules and admission requirements for higher education e.g. certain minimum marks and certain classes and levels. Therefore, I help the athletes choosing the right classes and levels so everything matches the plans they might have for their higher education after (or during) their sports career.

## **Expected outcomes**

Hopefully the athlete, after 4-5 years of studies in average, obtains a high-school degree which can be used for enrollment to further education at university college or university when the sports career ends.

## **Further information**

<https://vucl yngby.dk/>

<https://vucl yngby.dk/about-vuc-lyngby/>

<https://www.ug.dk/uddannelser-til-unge/hf-enkeltfag>

<https://4-player.dk/>

## Good practice: Estonia

Jaana Oro, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund

### HOW TO PREPARE FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

**Workshop objective:** to provide an overview of the job interview process and create opportunities to present one's strengths and suitability for a position more consciously and confidently. At the beginning of the workshop, verbal agreements are made with participants: active participation throughout the workshop leads to the best results; confidentiality – what is shared within the group stays within the group.

**Learning outcome:** the participant understands the purpose and nature of a job interview, is familiar with different types of interviews, knows what a first impression is and why it matters, can present themselves to an employer, and can prepare effectively for a job interview.

**Target group:** adults older than 18 years.

### DESCRIPTION

The job search process consists of four main stages, all of which are interconnected: self-analysis, identifying suitable opportunities, preparing application documents, and preparing for the job interview. This workshop focuses on the final stage – preparing for the interview. Job interviews often cause anxiety, but receiving an invitation already means the candidate has successfully passed the previous stages and reached the final and most important step: the conversation with the employer.

At the start of the workshop, each participant shares their most recent interview experience and describes it in one or two words. The facilitator asks participants to assess their current interview-related knowledge and skills on a scale of 1-10 (1 – no knowledge, 10 – very strong knowledge and skills).

The facilitator briefly explains the purpose of a job interview and the employer's expectations. An interview helps determine whether the candidate fits the organisation's needs, values, and team culture. The employer seeks confirmation of the information in the application documents, evaluates the candidate's skills, experience, and communication abilities, and tries to understand their motivation and suitability for the team. The facilitator emphasises that an interview is not an interrogation but a dialogue between two equal partners.

**Discussion with participants:**

- What do you think employers pay the most attention to during interviews?
- What questions have you been asked in previous interviews, and how did you respond?
- Could your answers have been more meaningful?

The facilitator introduces different types of interviews: phone interviews, face-to-face interviews, online interviews, group interviews, and video recordings (where the candidate records answers to predefined questions and sends them to the employer). Participants analyse what is important to consider and how to behave in each type of interview. The facilitator explains that employers may start with a group interview and then proceed to individual interviews.

**Discussion:**

Which types of interviews have you participated in, and which seem the most challenging?

After a short summary, the workshop moves on to the next topic.

**MEETING AN EMPLOYER AT A FAIR OR IN AN OFFICE**

The facilitator explains the importance of first impressions and discusses participants' experiences and examples of situations where first impressions are formed. The group explores how to create a short self-introduction (elevator pitch).

A practical exercise follows. Depending on the group's preference, this may involve the STAR method, self-analysis using a suitable worksheet, or practising interview questions in pairs or groups. After the exercise, participants share their reflections and reassess their interview readiness on a scale of 1-10. The facilitator summarises the key points - what to keep in mind when preparing for an interview at different stages.

**Key ideas:**

- Preparation = confidence
- Practice builds mastery
- A job interview is a two-way conversation

Participants are invited to share what new knowledge or skills they gained and what their next step will be. The importance of applying the acquired skills in practice is emphasised: seeking opportunities to interact with employers at fairs, recruitment days, short-term jobs, and completing their personal interview preparation plan.

Participants are introduced to the option of preparing for an interview with a career specialist online or at an employment office. Independently, they can use the interview studio at <https://minukarjaar.ee/en/kandideerija-veebistuudio>, where they can record their answers on video, download them, and analyse their performance.

The workshop equips participants with practical skills to present themselves more effectively to employers and boosts their confidence for successful job interviews.

**Links for further information:**

<https://minukarjaar.ee/en>

[www.tootukassa.ee/en/events](http://www.tootukassa.ee/en/events)

## Good practice: Estonia

Monika Sutrop, Tallinn University of Technology

### INITIATIVES OF CAREER AREA IN TALTECH AND METHODS OF CAREER CONSELLING

#### TALTECH INTERNSHIP PORTAL (CAREER.TALTECH.EE)

##### Expected outcomes

- Increased availability of field-related internships and entry-level job opportunities for students.
- Stronger collaboration between TalTech and employers.
- Improved student employability and smoother transition from studies to the labor market.
- More efficient and targeted recruitment process for employers.

##### Target group

- TalTech students and recent graduates seeking internships or entry-level jobs in their field.
- Employers (companies and organizations) interested in recruiting TalTech students and graduates.

##### Description

The TalTech Career Portal ([career.taltech.ee](https://career.taltech.ee)) is an online platform designed to connect students with employers. It provides a centralized space where students can find internships and beginner-level job opportunities related to their field of study.

Employers can independently publish internships, and job offers (controlled by university staff if they are our study field related), making it easy to reach a targeted audience of TalTech students and graduates. The platform supports direct communication between students and employers and simplifies the recruitment process.

The portal is also used as a tool within career services to guide students in their job search, encourage early career planning, and promote practical experience during studies.

##### Further information

<https://career.taltech.ee>

## INTERNSHIP COORDINATORS NETWORK

### Expected outcomes

- Improved quality of internships across study programs.
- A more consistent and structured framework for organizing internships.
- Better information flow between the university and internship coordinators.
- Increased sharing and implementation of best practices.
- Enhanced student experience, ensuring meaningful and high-quality internships.

### Target group

- Internship coordinators within TalTech (academic and administrative staff).
- Indirectly: TalTech students participating in internships.

### Description

The Internship Coordinators Network is a collaborative initiative that brings together internship coordinators across the university. The network meets twice a year with the main goal of improving internship quality. There is also a possibility to share information on day-to-day basis.

These meetings provide a platform for coordinators to exchange best practices, discuss challenges, and develop a more consistent and high-quality framework for organizing internships. The network also plays an important role in ensuring that relevant information, updates, and guidelines reach all coordinators effectively.

By strengthening collaboration and shared understanding among coordinators, the initiative supports the overall goal of ensuring that every student has access to a meaningful and high-quality internship experience.

## CAREER SEMINARS ON JOB APPLICATIONS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### Expected outcomes

- Improved job application skills (CV writing, motivation letters, interview readiness).
- Increased student confidence in entering the labor market.
- Better understanding of career choices and pathways.
- Stronger connection between students and employers.
- Practical insights into employer expectations.

### Target group

- TalTech students and recent graduates.
- International students (seminars available in English).

### Description

TalTech organizes 1.5-hour career seminars focused on key topics such as job applications, CV writing, career choices, and entering the labor market.

The seminars are primarily delivered by employer representatives, especially HR professionals, who provide practical insights into recruitment processes and employer expectations. In addition, TalTech career counsellors contribute by offering guidance-based perspectives and supporting students' career development.

The seminars are conducted in both Estonian and English, ensuring accessibility for international students. The format is interactive and practice-oriented, often including real-life examples, tips, and opportunities for reflection.

This collaboration between employers and university counsellors ensures a balanced approach, combining labor market expectations with student support.

## MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING IN CAREER COUNSELLING

### Expected outcomes

- Increased motivation and engagement in career planning.
- Greater clarity in career goals and next steps.
- Improved decision-making skills regarding studies and career paths.
- Reduced procrastination and indecision.
- Stronger sense of responsibility and ownership over career choices.

### Target group

- Students who are uncertain about their career direction.
- Students experiencing low motivation, indecision, or procrastination.
- Career counsellors using the method in individual or group counselling.

### Description

Motivational Interviewing (MI) in career counselling is a client-centered approach that helps students explore their career-related goals, values, and ambivalence. It is particularly effective when students feel unsure about their direction, lack motivation, or struggle to take action.

The method focuses on supporting students in identifying their own reasons for change rather than providing direct advice. Through open-ended questions, reflective listening, and a supportive dialogue, the counsellor helps the student clarify what matters to them, explore different career options, and move towards concrete decisions. Motivational Interviewing strengthens intrinsic motivation and empowers students to take active steps in their career development. It is especially useful in helping students overcome hesitation, set realistic goals, and commit to their chosen path.

### Further information

<https://motivationalinterviewing.org>

<https://millerandrollnick.com>

## INTEGRATING COGNITIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL METHODS IN CAREER DECISION-MAKING

### Expected outcomes

- Increased clarity in career decision-making.
- Better alignment between personal values, expectations, and career choices.
- Enhanced self-awareness in relation to work preferences.
- More confident and informed career decisions.

### Target group

Students and young adults making career choices.

### Description

This method combines cognitive (analytical) and experiential (emotional and imaginative) approaches to support individuals in making career decisions. It is best to be used when there has been already a session of self-analysis: interviewing, career tests, discussing career options, interests, strengths etc. I usually use it at the end of the session where we start with the mind mapping part and then at home the client can search for more options from university sites, career sites etc.

First, career options are mapped and evaluated using a structured, numerical scale ranging from +2 to -2. (+2 being very good, +1 being good; 0 being cannot say -1 being not good; -2 being bad).

The career possibilities are mapped out to paper in a mind map (it can be a job post, area of study, a company name – all is good. Most important is to be very open at first, with no critical thinking.).

Before mind-mapping choices there will be an imagination: if you won a lottery and money would not be issue, you have travelled for a few years, invested, etc., you will become bored and would like to work for 3 days a week, what would it be?

Then all the possibilities that are discussed and the possibilities that will be hobbies and not professional choices are eliminated.

Five most important job values are written down as assessment criteria for the choices (money, interest, job location, diversity etc. It is possible to use also a separate job value assessment sheet).

Then the career choices are assessed through job values using numerical scale allowing individuals to compare options in a clear and rational way and 1-3 best options of categories are chosen.

Following this, the method shifts to an experiential approach. Individuals are invited to physically and mentally “step into” these final career options – often by standing on a blank space (e.g. paper on the floor) representing each option. Through guided imagination, they reflect on how each option feels, helping them access intuitive and emotional responses that may not emerge through analytical thinking alone.

By combining these two approaches, the method enables a more holistic decision-making process that integrates both logic and intuition.

## MAPPING UNIVERSITY STUDY CHOICES ON THE SCIENCES–HUMANITIES AXIS

### Expected outcomes

- Better understanding of different academic fields and their relationships with job opportunities.
- Increased clarity in choosing a suitable field of study.
- Improved ability to position personal interests on a study spectrum.
- More informed and confident study choices.

### Target group

- High school students and prospective university applicants.
- Students exploring or reconsidering their field of study.

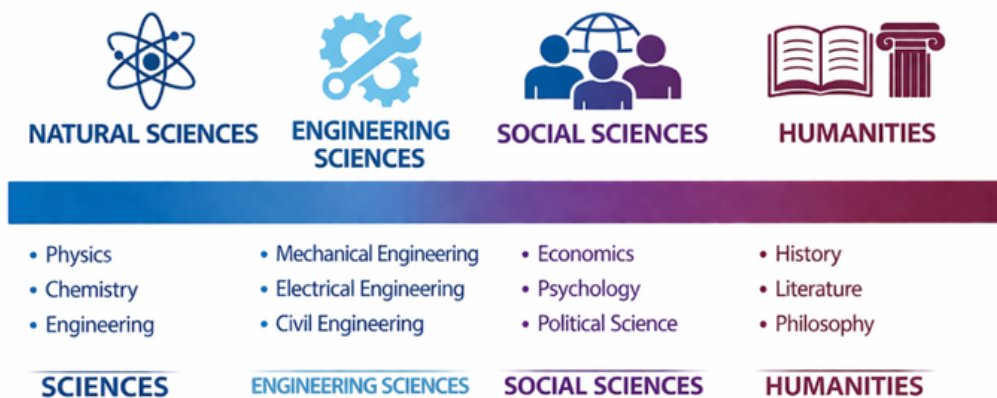
### Description

This method helps students explore university study options by placing academic fields on a visual axis ranging from natural sciences to humanities.

The axis is structured as follows:

- Natural sciences on one end (e.g. physics, chemistry).
- Engineering sciences positioned between natural and social sciences.
- Social sciences in the middle (e.g. psychology, economics).
- Humanities on the opposite end (e.g. history, literature)

Students map different study fields onto this continuum and reflect on where their interests and strengths lie. The visual approach helps them better understand how disciplines relate to each other and supports more structured and meaningful decision-making.



# Good practice: France

Cassandre Fanget, CIO Annonay

## MY PRACTICE, METHODS AND INITIATIVES

### I. MY PRACTICE

I work as a psychologist of the National Education, specializing in Education, Development and Counselling in Educational and Professional Guidance. I therefore work at the Information and Guidance Center and in secondary or high schools.

In the education field, I work to promote the academic success of each student; support school retention/prevention of dropping out; contribute to well-being at school; support co-education: promote connection to school; support students with special educational needs (disabilities, learning disorders, behavioral and psychological difficulties, etc.); and work with the educational teams (advice to the teaching teams and partnership with the medico-social field).

I contribute to helping teenagers grow at school; supporting the social dynamic relationship with peers and adults; providing insight to families and teams on adolescent issues and their possible impacts on learning and promoting school motivation, knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence.

In the orientation, the objective is to help them with better understanding of the paths (diplomas, opportunities, etc.); to support reflection; to help with decision-making and to offer students support in their reflection to develop a future project.

#### **1. The information and guidance center**

At the information and guidance center, we welcome all clients (teenagers and adults) that wish to learn or discuss their educational and professional orientation. The information and guidance centres are located throughout the entire territory. Our mission is to advise the general public, especially young people attending school and their families; to inform about studies, vocational training, qualifications and professions; to support them; to observe and analyze local transformations in the education system and changes in the labor market, and to produce summary documents for educational teams or students; to facilitate exchanges and reflections between partners of the education system, parents, young people, local decision-makers and economic leaders.

## **2. Schools**

As for work in schools, I am present for listening, dialogue and counselling, to identify the needs of adolescents in the school setting, accompany and/or direct them towards the other experts if necessary. Teamwork within institutions is necessary and I am in permanent contact with the principal teachers, the CPE (senior education advisor), the director of the institution... (to develop especially the orientation component of the institutional project), the medico-psychological team, external structures and partners, etc.

## **3. FIR time**

Within my schedule, one day per week is devoted to professional writing, documentary research, and management of the institutional organization. It can be done outside the structures named above. It is also an opportunity to implement my time, that is to say a mandatory time allocated to psychologists dedicated to Training, Information, and Research in order to update themselves with the recently published scientific literature.

## **II. METHODS**

The psychologists of the National Education have the particularity to intervene at school, a privileged place of social life for children and adolescents. The goal is put in the center the needs of the young people, for example by being interested in their individual and social well-being within the school but also in their educational and orientation background, their difficulties and strenghts, personal and at school. The possible actions for the psychologist of the National Education are numerous. It can be taken from different levels, from analysis to care, support. It is based on the individual, collective and institutional.

### **1. Identification and analysis**

Firstly, it is a question of taking into consideration the available data for a better understanding of the organisational context in order to analyze its content and the links they may have with practice. Then, this analysis could shed light on the indicators that influence academic success. In parallel, the analytical axis of the work of the psychologist of National Education is also important during interviews to understand the representational dimension concerning the quality of life for students within a given institution.

### **2. Awareness and collective prevention**

In a second step, it seems essential to address the possibilities of prevention and collective interventions in connection with students. Indeed, we can intervene in class, in co-animation or not, to address themes such as the stress of exams, the different possible school paths, the choice of higher education, psycho-social skills, etc.

### **3. Individual support**

One of the main aspects of the work of the psychologist of National Education is individual support. Here, interviews regarding their questions about their orientation paths can be conducted. Support for students with special educational needs, psychological distress may also be offered. Family guidance may also be possible depending on the student's situation.

### **4. Work with the educational teams**

In the context of the school, the different staff, and mostly teachers, have a major role. Prevention with them can be carried out regarding adolescent psychic functioning, cognitive biases, the impact of language and positive education, etc. In parallel, our expertise in psychological and social functioning and the role of technical advisor to the psychologist of the National Education can be useful for the support and implementation of innovative school or classroom projects.

## **III. INITIATIVES**

I have been working within the National Education for two years. The notion of educational and professional orientation within my practice is quite recent for me. During my past experiences in specialized street prevention in Marseille, or at the Judicial Protection of Youth in Saint Étienne, orientation was not central to my practice. It is therefore with a new perspective that I approach this field.

In terms of initiatives implemented in the institutions, it seems interesting to address the possibilities of prevention and collective interventions in connection with the students and conducted in partnership with the staff of the institution. In favor of individual well-being, collective interventions concern self-esteem, self-confidence for example. To promote the quality of social life, work can be carried out around socio-emotional learning or psycho-social skills with PRODAS workshops for example. Actions to education in respect, otherness, cooperation, etc. could also be proposed.

A reflection on the influence of media and social networks can be conducted to understand the workings of algorithms that bias our self-image, that of others and increase times of social isolation and physical immobility.

## Good practices: Germany

Anima Lauxtermann, Agentur für Arbeit Osnabrück

### SMARTPHONE - LESSON FOR CAREER GUIDANCE

#### **Expected outcome**

Experience shows that direct contact with companies often presents a significant hurdle. Students are familiar with communicating in writing, via text messages or short emails. Therefore, contacting companies by phone is particularly overwhelming for them.

However, especially in conservative regions, a phone call is preferred to an email, which can sometimes seem impersonal. Furthermore, a phone call has the advantage of clarifying issues without delay.

The aim of this lesson is to establish career guidance as a trustworthy and experienced resource. Furthermore, students should learn how to use their smartphones to search for internships in their region. The lesson also aims to reduce anxiety about contacting potential employers by phone and teach students how to prepare effectively for such calls.

#### **Target group**

In Germany, most regions require students in the 8th and 9th grades to complete an internship. The target group is therefore students facing the challenge of establishing professional contacts and applying for jobs for the first time.

#### **Practice**

The lesson is designed to last approximately 90 minutes. As a first step, the school's career guidance service introduces itself. This is often the first contact students have with career guidance. The curriculum requires students to find a two-week internship. Prior to this, the students have already explored their interests and some have even begun searching for internships independently.

## **Part 1 (entire class)**

The students shall scan the QR code shown on the assignment sheet, which leads to the regional website of the district. There, various companies offering internships in different professions are listed. The task is now to gather information for a specific profession: Who is my contact person? What apprenticeships are offered? Where can I find the company? What information do I need to apply? Afterwards, the results are discussed together, and any gaps in knowledge are identified. This leads into the next part of the lesson. It becomes clear that contacting the employer will be necessary to apply for an internship.

## **Part 2**

The class is divided into two groups. One group accompanies the career advisor to a second room. There, they find a printout of a smartphone and various app icons. The students are asked to match the apps with the descriptions that are also provided. The topic is important for a phone call. For example, the student should know when their internship takes place. They should know their own contact information and when they are best reached. A calm atmosphere during the call and having something to write down are also important, for example, to note the name of the contact person at the employer. The aim is to encourage discussion with the class and to stimulate reflection on their own internships. Furthermore, the students should learn that they don't need to be afraid of phone calls, as there are only people on the other end of the line.

The second group simulates two phone calls. A partition wall is set up in the room for this purpose. On one side is an old-fashioned telephone, like the kind grandparents might have had. The employer sits on this side. On the other side sits the student, who is allowed to use their own smartphone. Three students are allowed to sit on each side. They cannot see each other during the call. The remaining students observe and listen. The conversations are written down on a piece of paper. The employer has guiding questions that they ask the student. The first scenario involves asking about an internship. The second scenario describes a lack of response from the employer to an internship application. The student has to follow up to confirm receipt of the application. After the simulations, the calls are evaluated. Pre-agreed feedback guidelines must be followed. Afterwards, the groups switch roles so that everyone completes both tasks.

## **Part 3**

Afterwards the results will be evaluated and experiences shared with the entire class. The results from the first group are printed on a handout. This handout also includes contact information for the career guidance service, further links for career orientation, and a website for finding companies in the region.

## Further information

Regional internship searches:

<https://www.ausbildungsregion-osnabrueck.de/betriebsdatenbank>

All topics related to career choice:

<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung>

## BERLIN OR BARCELONA?

### Expected outcome

Students should learn that making a decision requires information that can influence their choice. It's the same with choosing a career: what can I consider when deciding for or against a particular profession? What does a decision feel like? Have I gathered enough information?

### Target group

Students who are at the beginning of their career orientation process (approx. 2 years before graduating from general education school).

### Practice

The class is asked to stand in the middle of the room. A scenario is described. The class is going on a class trip. They can choose whether they want to travel to Berlin or Barcelona. They are asked to stand in one corner of the room for Berlin and in another for Barcelona. Various pieces of information are then presented. After each new piece of information, the students can change their minds and stand in the other corner.

Information might include:

- Decision 1. The trip to Barcelona takes approximately 15 hours by bus. The trip to Berlin involves flying (approximately 1 hour flight time).
- Decision 2. In Barcelona, the group will camp. In Berlin, a hotel stay (4-star) is planned.
- Decision 3. Students will be accompanied by their parents to Berlin. Only their favorite teacher will accompany them to Barcelona.
- Decision 4. In Berlin, museum visits are planned, with approximately 2 hours of free time. In Barcelona, trips to the beach are planned.

- Decision 5. 300 € is allocated for spending money in Barcelona. The students receive €100 in pocket money for the trip to Berlin.
- Decision 6. In Barcelona the students are allowed to use their smartphone für at least 1 hour per day. In Berlin they are allowed to use their phone all day.
- Decision 7. The weather in Berlin will be rainy with temperatures around 15 degrees Celsius. In Barcelona, the students can expect sunshine and temperatures around 21 degrees Celsius.

Most students usually change their minds at least once. After answering the questions, the results are evaluated. Who didn't change their mind? Who switched locations and why? What does the game have to do with career orientation? The conclusion is that choosing a career also requires information that can lead to further considerations. Therefore, information that needs to be researched is important for making a good choice. What is important to me personally: Do I need information about salary? Do I work indoors or outdoors, or what further training opportunities are available to me? The game is designed to encourage reflection on oneself and one's own desires.

Other destinations can also be chosen. It is important that they initially present a contrast (e.g., by the sea/abroad or in one's own country without a sea, as in the example).

## CARD - SORTING

### Expected outcome

The aim of this method is for students to explore their own interests and learn to investigate and structure them. They should independently determine which aspects are important to them in choosing a career, what they can rule out, and in which areas further research might be beneficial.

### Target group

Young adults aged between 18 and 25 years. Depending on which card set is chosen, the method is also well suited for all people who want to (re)orient themselves professionally.

### Practice

**Step 1:** This method requires a card set with at least 50 images depicting a wide variety of situations and objects.

It should result in a complete representation of work areas. For young students, who have to make a first career choice a card set with interest-oriented pictures is well suited. The young adult is first asked to sort these images. Four categories are established for this purpose: very interesting, interesting, less interesting, and uninteresting.

**Step 2:** After the cards have been sorted, the next task is to cluster the individual categories. The two piles labeled "uninteresting" and "less interesting" are then discarded. The young adult has to sort the remaining two piles according to their own predefined criteria. For example, they could sort the cards again according to professional interests and hobbies. Or they could draw connections between the individual images. The career counselor takes on a listening role and provides guidance by offering prompts or guiding questions.

**Step 3:** As a next step, the young adult shall find generic terms. Overarching themes could include, for example, career advancement opportunities, salary, creativity, or even security. It's important that the client finds suitable themes for the cards they've sorted themselves. The consultant acts as a support and provides further inspiration. Ideally, the client shares their thoughts with the consultant and verbalizes them. Of course, it is perfectly acceptable to rearrange the cards and introduce new ideas into the search for overarching themes.

**Step 4:** Saving the results is the next important step of the method. The young adult should review their topics and, if necessary, add headings. The counsellor then asks specifically what new insights regarding their career choice could be gained from sorting the cards. What surprised the young adult? Where does he see his strengths? What new information about themselves has emerged?

**Step 5:** In the final step, the insights gained are used to provide targeted information. Which ideas can be implemented in practice? What prerequisites are necessary to realize a specific career aspiration? For example, a young adult might envision working with children as their future career goal. This requires a specific school-leaving qualification to pursue vocational training in that field. In the fifth step, the advisor provides information about possible pathways to the desired training or explores potential alternatives together with the client.

### **Further information**

The method is provided by the Federal Employment Agency as a basis for advice to its career counsellors which is published on an internal website for employees. It seems to have its origins in application development, in order to create user-friendly interfaces, which is f.e. described in the following [Wikipedia article](#). It cites the following literature as a source: Groher, Eva (2007): Beschäftigungsorientierte Beratung. Ein Beitrag aus sozialkonstruktivistischer Perspektive. Hamburg.

## Good practice: Norway

Maria Gundersen, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

### Overview of career guidance in Norway

Career guidance services in Norway are available in a range of different sectors to many different target groups. The Directorate of Higher Education and Skills (my employer) has the national system responsibility for the public career guidance services in Norway. The goal is to increase access to the services, strengthen the quality of career guidance, and help ensure equal access for young people and adults at all stages of life. In Norway we have a national quality framework for career guidance, established to ensure exactly that. The overall goal is for the quality framework to contribute to high-quality career guidance services across all sectors in Norway.

### THE NATIONAL DIGITAL CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICE “KARRIEREVEILEDNING.NO”

Karriereveiledning.no was launched in 2020, offering free digital career guidance for the Norwegian population, regardless of age, place of residence, work, and educational situation. The service provides free, anonymous, and quality-assured drop-in career guidance via chat, e-mail, and telephone. Opening hours are user-centered and vary throughout the year, with extended opening hours in the months leading up to the higher education application deadlines as well as high school deadlines.

We are a team of sixteen career counsellors, all based in Tromsø in Northern Norway, with diverse educational backgrounds. What we share is higher education and experience in providing guidance across different contexts. The advantage of our diverse educational backgrounds and experience from different sectors is that we learn from one another and share our expertise, resulting in broad and complementary knowledge within the team.

While most users contacting the digital career guidance service are young adults (18–25), the user group is wide and diverse. They seek support in career and education decisions, competence mapping, and in navigating transitions between education, work, career change, or unemployment.

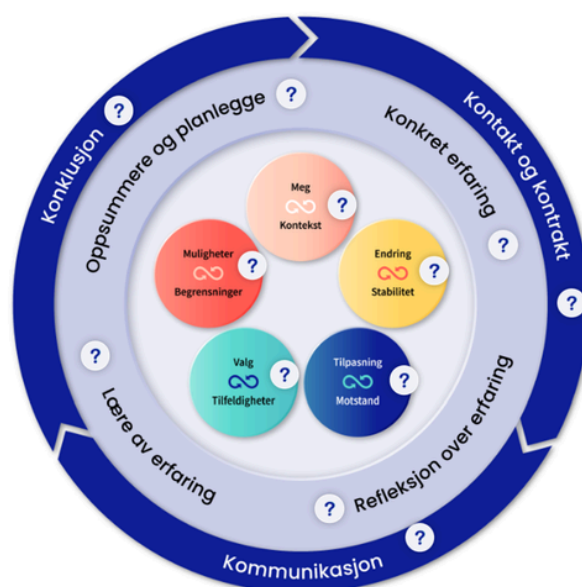
To ensure that all our work is of high professional quality and in line with ethical guidelines, we have developed our own guide for digital career guidance. The guide addresses key aspects such as data protection and privacy, clarification of time and expectations, meta-communication, the use of emojis, mirroring the user’s language by adapting to the person we are speaking with, and actively engaging the user to avoid one-way communication.

The expected outcome of karriereveiledning.no is increased competence for informed and reflective career decision-making throughout the lives of individuals seeking career guidance. Delivered as a digital service, it improves accessibility and lowers barriers to career guidance for a wide and diverse user group, while also helping to make the field and terminology of career guidance more visible and familiar.

Target group are all citizens in Norway.

### Which theories do we use?

“MDC” = Model for Digital Career guidance



When selecting theories for our digital practice, we naturally looked to Denmark, which already had an established digital career guidance service. The **Danish 4K model (contact, contract, communication, conclusion)** addresses key challenges in digital guidance, such as establishing dialogue, ensuring mutual understanding, and supporting guidance seekers in moving forward.

However, we found a need for adaptations and therefore developed our own model (3K), where career learning is in focus. We also wanted to implement our own quality framework in this model. To sum it up: 4K provides the overall structure of the guidance conversation, David Kolb’s learning cycle emphasizes the learning perspective, and the career buttons address the content.

Our service receives questions across a very wide range of topics, which requires us as career guidance practitioners to have extensive knowledge of where to find relevant information, how to interpret it, and how to provide guidance on the diverse issues we encounter daily.

Over nearly six years of operation, we have also developed an internal knowledge base with almost 200 articles, organized into categories such as education, work and occupations, immigrants and refugees, and methodology.

We rely on the internal knowledge base to find the information we need, as well as tips and inspiration for guidance conversations that we may find challenging.

At [karriereveiledning.no](http://karriereveiledning.no), the user is always at the center of our work. As a digital service, we can collect relevant insights and gain a unique understanding of users' needs. Drawing on more than 90,000 chat conversations, this insight has formed the basis for developing our own tools – tools grounded in the challenges guidance seekers most frequently face in relation to education and work. Some of these tools are based on artificial intelligence. This leads me to our next good practice: one of these tools.

## **AN AI BASED TOOL FOR EXPLORING EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION OPTIONS**

It is a digital self help tool available on [karriereveiledning.no](http://karriereveiledning.no). The tool uses artificial intelligence to suggest relevant education programs and occupations based on the user's stated interests. Users answer a small number of questions and select interests they recognize in themselves (2 steps). After that the tool presents a selection of possible educational and occupational paths, all of which link directly to [utdanning.no](http://utdanning.no) – a quality-assured source of education and labor market information administered by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills.

The tool is freely available, does not require login, and can be used anonymously. It is clearly communicated to users that the tool is under development and may contain inaccuracies, and that the results should be seen as inspiration rather than recommendations or final answers.

The tool is designed as a support in career learning, where its purpose is to stimulate reflection and exploration by helping users put words to their interests and connect these to concrete opportunities within education and work.

### **Target group**

Primarily young people facing educational choices, especially those considering upper secondary education, but also relevant for adults who are exploring new career paths or seeking inspiration.

## Expected outcome

The tool helps users explore how their interests relate to education and occupations, supporting informed career choices. It can be used on its own or as part of a career guidance conversation.

## Why did we make this tool?

User insights from the digital career guidance service showed that the concept of interest was frequently mentioned in guidance conversations. At the same time, career counsellors experienced that many users found it difficult to put their interests into words, especially to relate them to concrete education or occupation options. This tool was developed in response to these recurring challenges and complements both guidance conversations and other self help resources.

## Feedbacks on the tool

The digital tool was selected as a finalist for the "User Experience Award 2025" in Norway, an award that recognizes digital solutions with strong user experience, good design and a high standard of accessibility.

"I love how many options there are!"

"It looks very good. It's clear and easy to understand."

"I like that it expands the choices and gives you more options."

"I found a new occupation I had never heard of before."

"Easy to use. I will keep using it."



## Useful links

(Kolbs learning cycle) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>

National quality framework: <https://hkdir.no/en/national-quality-framework-for-career-guidance>

Career buttons as a practical tool, and also a part of our model for digital career guidance“: <https://kik.hkdir.no/en/categories/tool/career-buttons-a-resource-for-career-learning-in-context>

The career guidance quality lab: The career Guidance Quality Lab is a digital workspace developed by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills to support career guidance professionals in improving their practice. The Lab offers tools, reflection exercises, and resources that help practitioners work systematically with quality – without formal qualification requirements. <https://kik.hkdir.no/en>

The national digital career guidance service: [www.Karriereveiledning.no](http://www.Karriereveiledning.no)

Tools for how to apply for jobs, when new in Norway (in English and Ukrainian). The tools were developed to support Ukrainian people arriving in Norway, because of the war: <https://karriereveiledning.no/en/sok-jobb-i-norge>

## Good practice: Spain

Ana Isabel Santos Martínez, IES Cencibel Secondary School and Vocational Training

### EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE PRACTICES IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

#### 1. Introduction

Educational and vocational guidance plays a key role in supporting students during adolescence, a stage in which important personal, academic and professional decisions begin to emerge. In Spanish secondary schools, guidance is understood as a continuous and developmental process that helps students understand themselves, explore opportunities and gradually build their own life projects.

As an educational counsellor (orientadora educativa) in a public secondary school (Instituto de Educación Secundaria - IES) in Castilla-La Mancha, my work focuses on supporting students' personal development, academic success and future planning. Guidance is not limited to providing information about studies or professions; it aims to **empower students to make informed and responsible decisions about their own futures.**

My work is based on collaboration with teachers, tutors, families and external services. Together we try to create an educational environment that supports students' well-being, promotes inclusion and helps each student develop their potential.

This document describes the main methods, practices and initiatives that structure my daily work as an educational counsellor.

#### 2. Methodological approach to guidance

My professional practice is based on a **preventive, inclusive and developmental approach**. Guidance is not only focused on solving problems but also on anticipating needs and supporting students in developing the competences necessary to manage their educational and professional pathways.

One of the central goals of guidance is to **empower students in their decision-making processes**. This means helping them develop autonomy, self-confidence and the ability to reflect critically on their options.

Several key principles guide my work:

- **Personalisation of guidance**

Students have different interests, motivations, abilities and personal circumstances. For this reason, guidance must be adapted to the needs of each student. Some actions are implemented with the whole class group, while others involve more personalised counselling.

- **Self-knowledge as the starting point**

Helping students understand themselves is fundamental for any future decision. Through different activities, students are encouraged to reflect on their interests, strengths, values and aspirations.

- **Access to clear academic and career information**

Students need reliable information about the educational system, available study pathways and possible professional opportunities. Providing this information allows them to better understand how their educational choices relate to future opportunities.

- **Development of decision-making skills**

Another important objective is helping students develop the skills needed to make thoughtful decisions. Guidance activities encourage students to analyse options, evaluate consequences and consider how their choices relate to their interests and abilities.

- **Collaboration with families**

Families play an essential role in the orientation process. Regular communication with parents allows them to support their children more effectively when important educational decisions must be made.

In many situations, the educational counsellor acts as a **mediator between the student, the educational system and the social and labour environment**, helping connect students' abilities and aspirations with real opportunities.

### **3. Core areas of guidance work**

The work of the Guidance Department in Spanish secondary schools is structured around three main planning frameworks. These plans organise guidance activities throughout the academic year and ensure that students receive comprehensive support.

The three main frameworks are:

#### **A. Tutorial Action Plan (PAT)**

The Tutorial Action Plan structures the work carried out by tutors with their class groups. Tutorial sessions are a key space where students can reflect on their learning, develop social competences and discuss topics related to their personal development.

Within this framework, the educational counsellor supports tutors by providing materials, designing activities and offering guidance on how to address different topics during tutorial sessions.

Typical areas addressed through the tutorial programme include:

- Emotional education and social skills
- Conflict resolution and improvement of school coexistence
- Study techniques and learning strategies
- Responsible use of digital technologies
- Respect for diversity and inclusion

These activities help students develop important life skills such as communication, empathy, responsibility and teamwork. They also contribute to creating a positive school climate and strengthening relationships between students and teachers.

#### **B. Support Plan for the Teaching–Learning Process (PAPEA)**

The Support Plan for the Teaching–Learning Process focuses on responding to the diversity of learners and ensuring that all students can access learning opportunities. Students may face different types of barriers to learning, including learning difficulties, motivational problems, language barriers or challenging personal circumstances. Through psycho-pedagogical assessments, the educational counsellor identifies specific needs and proposes appropriate support measures.

These measures may include:

- Individualised support plans
- Curricular adaptations
- Advice to teachers on inclusive methodologies
- Strategies to improve motivation and engagement

One important objective of this work is **preventing school failure and reducing the risk of early school leaving**. Early detection of learning difficulties allows the school to intervene quickly and provide appropriate support.

### **C. Academic and Vocational Guidance Plan (POAP)**

The Academic and Vocational Guidance Plan represents one of the most important areas of my professional practice. Its main objective is to help students progressively construct their **personal, academic and professional life projects**.

Guidance in this area focuses on several key dimensions:

- **Self-knowledge:** Students are encouraged to reflect on their interests, aptitudes, motivations and personal strengths. Different tools are used to facilitate this process, such as reflective activities, questionnaires and group discussions.
- **Academic and career information:** Students receive updated information about the educational system and the different pathways available after compulsory secondary education. This includes: Bachillerato pathways, Vocational Education and Training (VET), Dual VET programmes or possible transitions to higher education or employment. Providing clear and accessible information helps students and families understand the characteristics and requirements of each pathway.
- **Decision-making skills:** Another important objective is helping students develop the skills needed to make informed and responsible choices about their academic and professional futures.
- **Support for educational transitions:** Special attention is given to key transition moments, particularly the transition from compulsory secondary education (ESO) to Bachillerato or Vocational Education and Training. Guidance activities help students analyse their interests, academic performance and future expectations in order to choose the pathway that best fits their profile.

- **Family guidance:** Meetings and information sessions are organised for families so that parents can better understand the educational options available and support their children during the decision-making process.

#### **4. Examples of guidance practices and initiatives**

Several practical initiatives are implemented in the school to support students in personal, academic and career development:

- **Career exploration workshops**

Workshops are organised for students in the early years of secondary education. These activities focus on helping students explore their interests, identify their strengths and discover different professional sectors. Interactive activities encourage students to think about how their personal characteristics relate to possible future professions.

- **Educational pathways information programme**

For students in the final years of compulsory secondary education, structured sessions are organised to explain the different educational pathways available after ESO. During these sessions, students receive detailed information about Bachillerato, Vocational Education and Training and other possibilities. These sessions often involve collaboration with teachers and sometimes include talks from former students who share their experiences in different educational pathways.

- **Individual career guidance interviews**

Individual meetings with students and their families are organised during key decision moments. These interviews allow students to discuss their academic results, interests and future expectations. The objective is to support realistic and informed decisions while respecting the student's personal aspirations.

- **Early detection and prevention of school dropout**

Another important initiative involves identifying students who may be at risk of disengagement or academic difficulties. Through collaboration with tutors and teachers, early support strategies are implemented in order to improve motivation, strengthen learning strategies and prevent school dropout.

## **5. Conclusion**

Educational guidance in secondary schools plays a fundamental role in supporting students during a critical stage of their development. Through preventive, inclusive and student-centred practices, guidance helps students better understand themselves, explore opportunities and make informed decisions about their futures.

By working closely with teachers, families and the wider educational community, the educational counsellor contributes to creating an environment where students can develop their potential and successfully navigate their educational and professional pathways.

## Good practice: Sweden

Vanja Litendahl, Vägledning & Kompetens Mölndal

### GUIDANCE LESSONS IN SWEDISH FOR IMMIGRANTS, ADULT EDUCATION

#### Target group

My work is centred within adult education, specifically supporting immigrants learning Swedish (SFI). The target group is incredibly diverse, ranging in age from 16 to 82. Classes are divided by educational background and proficiency level. Students change classes once they have achieved the goals for a particular level, which happens at various times throughout the semester. Their backgrounds are equally varied: some hold advanced degrees, while others have had no formal schooling in their home countries. Some have fled war, while others have moved to Sweden for love. Consequently, the counselling for these students is varied, complex, and never boring.

#### Practices and initiatives

I conduct a series of lessons designed to empower students as they navigate their new home:

- **The Swedish educational system:** We explore the various types of schooling available in Sweden, from early childhood education to adult learning (Komvux, university, and folk high schools). By focusing on adult pathways and vocational training, we aim to inspire students and provide a clear map for their continued studies.
- **Self-knowledge and professional presence:** We discuss the characteristics and skills highly valued by Swedish employers. Students reflect on their own traits, practice formal self-presentations, and learn to articulate their skills in structured sentences. The goal is to prepare them for future job interviews and encourage self-reflection.
- **Professions and fields of work:** Through brainstorming and industry-focused exercises, we expand the students' 'horizon of possibilities'. We highlight different sectors, specifically focusing on fields with high labour shortages to help students make strategic career choices.

- **Rights and obligations:** The lesson covers the rules and regulations of the Swedish labour market. We discuss employment contracts, different types of employment, and labour laws to ensure students understand their responsibilities and, crucially, are not exploited in the workplace.
- **Job search skills:** Practical training in writing professional CVs and cover letters, paired with [mock](#) interview practice.
- **History of the labour market:** By looking at how work and regulations have evolved in Sweden since the early 20th century, students gain a deeper understanding of their current context. We compare these shifts with their home countries, fostering a sense of agency and the idea that society is something we all help shape.
- **The Puzzle of Life (Balance & Equality):** In Sweden, full-time work is generally expected of everyone regardless of gender. Many students feel the stress of balancing studies with traditional domestic expectations. We discuss time management, prioritisation, health-promoting activities, and gender equality to help students organise their daily lives successfully.

### Expected outcomes

- **External knowledge and increased self-awareness:** Students who have a better understanding of themselves and their surroundings are more likely to make better choices. Knowing which opportunities are available also increases motivation.
- **Increased agency:** Students transition from being passive participants to active navigators of their own careers.
- **Language integration:** Students improve their Swedish by discussing practical, real-world topics that affect their future.
- **Economic security:** By understanding their rights and the labour market, students are better equipped to find stable, fair employment.
- **Well-being:** Students gain tools to manage 'the puzzle of life', leading to decreased stress and more sustainable study habits.

## **Method**

We strive to reach all daytime SFI classes. To ensure equality between classes, we offer lessons on different days and times. I use an online booking form where teachers can select a desired time and theme.

Since students move between classes irregularly, I take notes after each lesson regarding which exercises were used and how they were received. This prevents excessive repetition for students who may remain in the same class for a longer period.

The nature of the target group requires that I, as a study and career counsellor, remain adaptable. While I always plan my lessons, I am prepared to adjust the content if I notice it is too difficult or if other needs arise during the session.

The regular teacher is always present in the classroom. This is important, as they know the students better and can provide targeted support. Their presence also ensures they can follow up on the topics in future lessons. Each lesson is designed to allow students to practice their speaking, writing, and reading skills. I keep the sessions varied to maintain interest, and the content is always adapted to the specific level of the class.

The goal is for all students to engage with every theme at some point during their time at SFI. Even when repeating a theme, the content is never exactly the same - because, as I mentioned, working with this target group is never boring.

## **Evaluation and continuous improvement**

To ensure the lessons remain relevant and effective, we always conclude by evaluating the session together with the students. In addition to our group discussion, students are invited to complete an anonymous evaluation form. To keep this process accessible and stress-free, we use a simple "smiley face" system where students can circle the emoji that best represents their experience. This low-pressure approach allows everyone to participate regardless of their Swedish proficiency. We then use this feedback to refine and improve our lessons over time, ensuring they continue to meet the students' evolving needs. So far, we have a very high percentage of students who are positive about the content of the lessons. A few have found it difficult, but most say that they have learned new words and that they have gained new knowledge about Sweden.

## Good practice: Switzerland

Anna Leuenberger, BIZ Kanton Bern

### SPECIALIZED COUNSELING FOR HIGHLY QUALIFIED REFUGEES AT THE BIZ CAREER GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION CENTERS OF THE CANTON OF BERN

#### Initial situation and expected outcomes

Highly qualified refugees often face difficulties entering the Swiss labor market – especially if they have limited work experience in their field, are somewhat older, or hold qualifications in sectors with low demand. The situation is further complicated if they do not yet speak the national languages well or face additional challenges (e.g., family responsibilities or health issues).

To support these individuals in integrating into the labor market and to make use of the domestic skilled labor potential, the BIZ Career Guidance and Information Centers of the Canton of Bern offer specialized counseling services in cooperation with migration authorities. These services are described in more detail below. There is no standardized evaluation of the counseling sessions; however, after each consultation, a detailed report is sent to the responsible social worker.

#### Target group

Highly qualified refugees who are registered for counseling at BIZ Bern by their social worker. Registration is done using a standardized form through which social workers submit specific questions to the counselors. Clients have usually studied in their home country (with or without a degree) or hold a secondary school diploma qualifying for university admission.

Consultations take place without interpreters, as clients must already have at least an A2 level of German. Most clients are between 25 and 45 years old. Depending on their residence status (permit B, F, or S), they may already have long-term residence rights or their future in Switzerland may still be uncertain.

Common countries of origin include Turkey, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, and professional backgrounds are very diverse. Many clients have children, which means that childcare is often an important factor in professional integration.

## **Description of the counseling service**

The following section explains how collaboration between BIZ counselors and social workers works, how a consultation is conducted, and which topics are central. Not all counselors at BIZ Bern and other BIZ locations specialize in advising highly qualified refugees. Instead, there is a specialized team that regularly exchanges knowledge and receives further training. Refugees from other BIZ locations can also be referred to this team.

Language acquisition and social integration form the foundation for professional integration. Support in these areas is provided by social services, which handle practical matters such as housing and also organize and finance language courses. Once a person reaches approximately an A2 level in a national language (German in Bern city and surroundings), professional integration (training or direct entry into the labor market) can begin.

Social workers can then draw on BIZ expertise and refer their clients for counseling. Sometimes they come with specific questions, such as:

- How do you assess the chances of direct labor market entry for Mr. X in his original profession?
- Which further training could improve his chances?
- Is recognition of his diploma possible?
- If direct entry is not feasible, what alternatives exist?

The counseling usually consists of two sessions. The first focuses on assessing the individual situation and defining goals. In addition to education and work experience, family responsibilities and the level of linguistic and social integration are also considered. This helps assess a person's potential, network, independence, and possible limitations.

## **Working with refugees**

Counseling refugees requires a high degree of sensitivity. It is essential that clients build trust with the counselor, who represents an authority. Many have experienced distressing or traumatic events and may have had negative experiences with authorities in their home country or during their journey.

Migration to Switzerland often involves the loss of social networks and social status. Language barriers can also make them feel misunderstood. It is therefore important not only to build trust but also to clearly explain what BIZ can offer and what its role is (guidance on education, labor market, and job search – but no direct job placement or implementation support). Implementation support is provided by social services, sometimes with the involvement of job coaches.

## Content of counseling

Consultations often focus on identifying suitable career paths, understanding requirements, and determining whether further education or training is needed. Career planning is often long-term and step-by-step. There is rarely a single “right” path; instead, different options must be explored.

## Short-term career planning

- Continued language learning: Many education programs and jobs require high proficiency (around C1). In the Canton of Bern, purely English-speaking jobs are rare, and French may also be required. Swiss German is often the spoken workplace language.
- Recognition of diplomas: Switzerland distinguishes between regulated and non-regulated professions. Regulated professions (e.g., in healthcare or social work) require formal recognition, which involves meeting specific criteria (e.g., language skills). Non-regulated professions (e.g., business or humanities fields) do not offer formal recognition, but a level assessment may be possible in certain cases.
- Initial entry into the labor market (sometimes in a different field) or voluntary work.

## Medium- and long-term planning

- Resuming education or further training.
- Moving closer to the original career goal or defining a new one.
- Achieving financial independence.

## Common topics in counseling

- How the Swiss education system works?
- Diploma recognition
- Training and further education opportunities and their requirements
- Support programs and networks (e.g., Bernetz, Frieda, Capacity, Powercoders)
- Volunteering
- Financing education
- Job applications and job search in Switzerland

## Experience-based success factors for labor market integration

- **Personal resources:** Openness, initiative, willingness to learn, and practicing the language help significantly.
- **Industry and experience:** Qualifications and relevant experience in high-demand sectors improves chances (Labour Market Switzerland).
- **Family situation:** Care responsibilities can make integration more difficult.
- **Health:** Good mental and physical health facilitates integration.
- **Support:** Assistance from social services, volunteers, or family is crucial.

## Distinction from other services

Of course not only highly qualified refugees benefit from specialized counseling at BIZ Bern, but also refugees with other or no qualifications, as well as migrants without a refugee background. However, referrals for these groups may come from different institutions or be initiated by the clients themselves.

Young people who migrate later in life usually attend standard BIZ services.

BIZ also offers events for adult migrants, such as application workshops and introductory sessions on work and education in Switzerland.

In addition to the BIZ of the Canton of Bern, there are many other governmental and non-governmental organizations that support adult migrants in integrating into the labor market (e.g., HEKS MosaiQ, Kompetenzzentrum Arbeit Stadt Bern, Ansprechstellen Integration, Bernetz, Capacity, Frieda, Powercoders).

## Conclusion

Specialized counseling for highly qualified refugees at the BIZ Career Guidance and Information Centers of the Canton of Bern is an important complement to the integration efforts of social services.

By combining individual assessment, information about the Swiss education and labor market systems, and the development of realistic career perspectives, refugees and other migrants can be effectively supported in their next professional steps.

At the same time, practical experience shows that labor market integration depends on many factors – including language skills, personal resources, family situation, and labor market demand. Close cooperation between BIZ counselors, social services, and other support providers (e.g., job coaches) is therefore essential to fully utilize the potential of highly qualified refugees and promote their sustainable integration into the Swiss labor market.

**Additional useful links on the topic (some also available in French and English)**

[Staatssekretariat für Migration SEM](#)

[Gesundheits-, Sozial- und Integrationsdirektion des Kantons Bern](#)

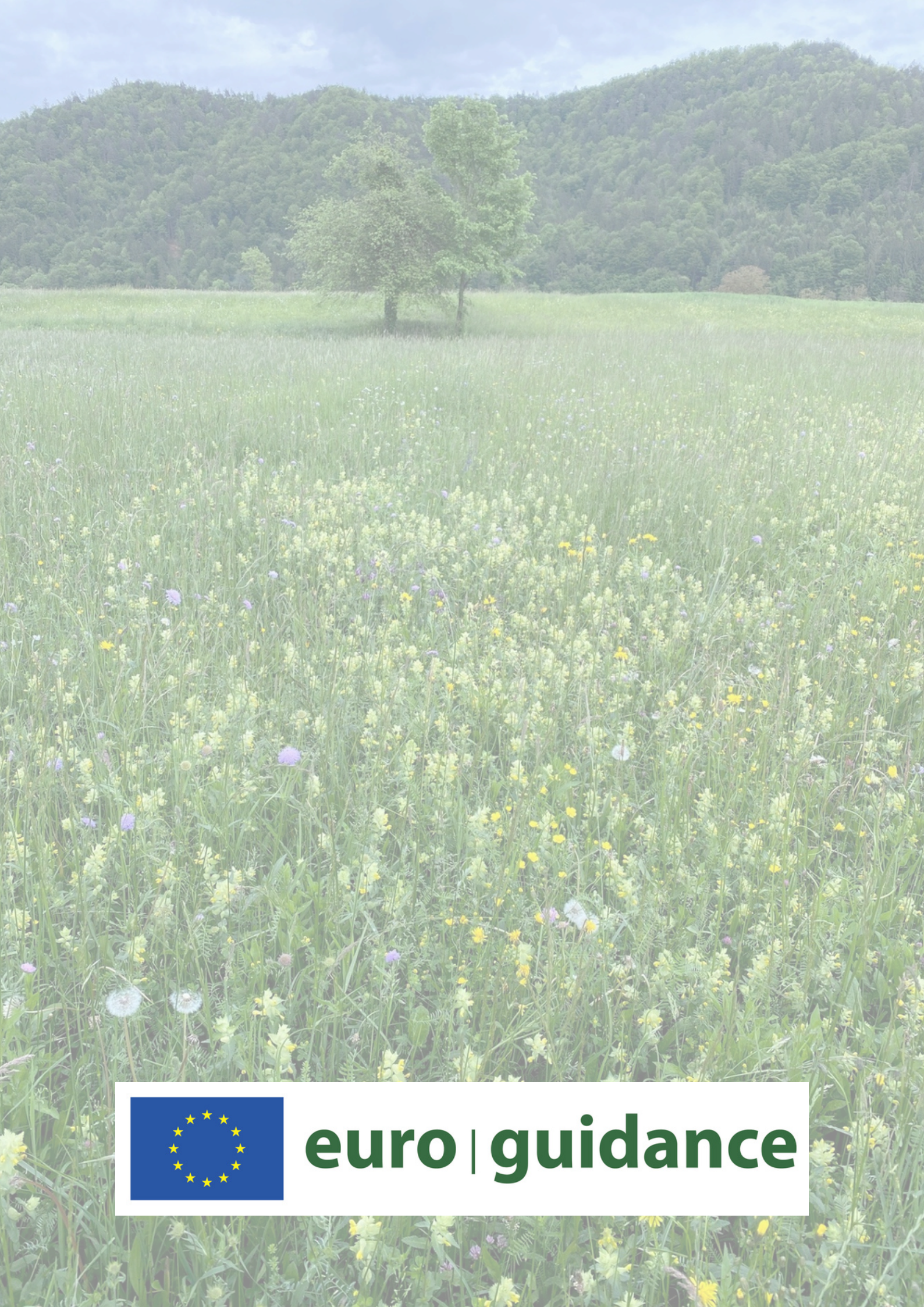
[Kirchliche Kontaktstelle für Flüchtlingsfragen](#)

[BIZ information for migrants](#)

[Perspektiven Studium - Support for Refugees in Accessing University Studies](#)

["Neu in der Schweiz" > berufsberatung.ch - information for migrants](#)

["Hallo Bern" - Multilingual website for migrants \(Kanton Bern\)](#)



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