

Recommendations suggestions and resources

FROM THE PROJECT

Social SELF-I. “Self-empowerment of guidance advisors and VET trainers for the promotion of social inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and adults in career transition”.

About the project

Social **SELF-I** is a 2-year project co-funded with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union: Key Action 2: Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices – Strategic partnerships VET – Year 2017.

The strategic partnership has been composed of four organisations from France, Germany, Greece and Italy, involved at different levels and in a variety of roles in processes concerning the social and labour integration of asylum seekers, refugees and adults of the general population facing career transitions.

The Partnership

ASPIC Lavoro – Associazione di Promozione Sociale, Non-profit organisation, Project Coordinator (IT)

EOPPEP – National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (GR)

HdBA – Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit, University of Applied Labour Studies (DE)

INSUP FORMATION – Vocational and Educational Training Organisation (FR)



Overall goal

Social inclusion and employability are strategic issues of the European Policy Agenda of these years, identifying two urgent and crucial areas concerning the emergency of migration and the needs of the most vulnerable adult population. The scope of the project is to exchange practices and experiences aimed at increasing the empowerment, awareness and competences of different players (professionals, experts, counsellors, career counsellors, practitioners, etc.) who work on activities related to the reception and integration process of individuals involved in transition paths and need to lead themselves, self-assess their competences, identify and document their skills.

Key-Themes of the Project

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE, ORIENTATION AND CAREER COUNSELLING
PROCESSES, METHODS, APPROACHES, TOOLS

IDENTIFICATION AND RECOGNITION OF SKILLS, ATTITUDES, QUALIFICATIONS
VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

ADAPTING, TAILORING, TRANSFERRING SKILLS AND PRACTICES ACROSS A
VARIETY OF CONTEXTS AND TARGET GROUPS

These topics have been the reference for the exchange of experiences and good practices between the partners for the whole work path of the project and specific sharing themes for 3 short training events that took place in Bordeaux, Mannheim and Rome.



Why these Recommendations?

According to international surveys (OECD-PIAAC 2012), many European citizens do not have the skills necessary to live and work in the current society (around 70 million in Europe) and there are few practices for identifying and making their skills visible (Cedefop 2016). At the same time in many European countries, there have not been developed specific tools for identifying refugees' skills (Social Agenda 2016), and the efforts to improve measures and guidance for vulnerable adult population do not seem to produce sufficient results; these are clear obstacles to their social and professional inclusion (European Pillar of Social Rights - 2017). Encouraging a broad and inclusive participation in learning, social and professional life is essential to any person to reach autonomy and make a meaningful life; especially for these population targets who need specific motivation, support, and guidance improving self-empowerment, personal and social identity, skills for employability.

The issues of language competences of the practitioners, and lack of knowledge about different cultural and work backgrounds of migrants are the main difficulties faced by those who work in vocational guidance, career counselling or other forms of tutorship at different stages of the reception and integration process. At the same time, most of the approaches and tools aimed at supporting vulnerable population target groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market, require adaptation and tailoring with respect to formal standards and requirements, validation and certifications procedures as well as to the methods and processes by which these actions are provided. Furthermore, this topic involves not only practitioners and staff working in job centres, employment centres, or even in receptions centres. It has also a strong impact on institutional research, training interventions and activities and proposals of policy makers and national agencies.

The Recommendations developed represent a contribution of the partnership on the issues of the Project Social Self-I. They are organized with reference to some key questions that have been addressed during the training periods of the project and well deepened with the exchange of practices and cooperation between the participants, coming from partner organisations enriched also with the contribution of invited experts and indirect participants to the training events coming from related organisations and/or professional sectors. In this sense, they reflect what we have learned from each other and what we have shared along the entire project path, consistent with our commitment to transfer and disseminate these experiences and learning gains to a variety of stakeholders and audiences.



To Whom

These recommendations are primarily addressed to professionals, career counsellors, psychologists, university professors, trainers, learning providers, workers of employment agencies, researchers, directly involved in vocational guidance and career counselling or engaged in activities aimed at guidance, training, assessment and empowerment of practitioners working in different contexts with vulnerable target groups, thus increasing the capacity to optimise the quality and of actions and services rendered.

The recommendations can be also of further interest for public and private institutions, local stakeholders, career guidance organizations that can usefully refer to what has been shared and suggested by the participants of the Social Self-I project. Moreover, policy makers and the educational and training system will find useful inputs to the redesign of training courses and some aspects of the counselling qualifications, keeping in mind both the challenges of the new theoretical approaches and of practical proposals emerging from the sharing and exchange of experiences of the partnership in this field.

The following recommendations are organized with reference to 5 key themes

- A. The development of specific processes, methods, approaches, tools for career guidance and counselling.
- B. Learning and practicing transversal skills/competencies to support practitioners' activities working with vulnerable target, refugees, low skilled.
- C. Implementing tailored approaches and tools for the identification and validation of knowledge, skills, qualifications and work experience.
- D. Challenges and resources in working in career counselling/guidance with vulnerable target populations (e.g. people forced to flee, people with psychological and health issues, with implications of stress, trauma, stigma and consequent needs to adjust to work and new social environment).
- E. A broad perspective and multi-stakeholder, multilevel approaches in designing inclusive paths to facilitate transition to education and work.

A. The development of specific processes, methods, approaches, tools for career guidance and counselling

A central issue to be considered in vocational/career guidance and counselling is about the specific characteristics of the target groups to which services are provided. It concerns the needs and personal and social resources of the specific target, that need to be considered at level of the theoretical approaches, methodologies, and processes to bring into the activities and interventions. The groups addressed by Social Self-I were: refugees and asylum seekers (often low skilled), people at risk of social and/or labour exclusion due to mental health or other health conditions or disability.

1. This means to emphasize the importance of flexibility, adaptability and the ability to personalize approaches and tools when working with these populations, to improve experience and knowledge on **theoretical and methodological approaches to guidance and orientation** in order to deal with the challenges, history and resources of each case, keeping in mind the unique, specific, culture and identity of these individuals and the need of their psycho-social features. (Life Design theory, s. Savickas et al. 2009).

An “integrative customized” approach is fundamental with the aim of encouraging a reflection on personal conditions, the acceptance of the need for change, the overcoming resistance, and the acceleration of motivational processes and empowerment. The humanistic approach (Rogers, 1956, 1961; Maslow, 1962, 1979; Norcross, 1987) is the basis to emphasize the users’ strengths and their enormous human potential.

2. The use of **narrative methods**, the use of non-verbal (e.g. visual) methods, self-reflection in a way that is encouraging and empowering the construction of a vision of oneself and of the world; a variety of applications of autobiographical narrative is a process which favors the understanding and attribution of meaning to one's past together with the planning of one's future (ASPIC Pluralistic integrative approach, s. Anagnostopoulos, 2016).
3. In vocational/career guidance there are no ready answers on what choices any person should make. This implies the importance of stimulating the acquisition of self-knowledge (also with regard to vocational decision making), creating opportunities for **self-analysis, self-assessment and self-empowerment processes**, and shedding light on the context of the individual problems. (HdBA – CMinaR project, s. Kohn, 2019).
4. **Specific career guidance and orientation approaches** also need to be adopted during the counselling process (in relation with the phase of readiness of the individual), to support concrete action plans and behaviors (e.g. how to draw up an effective curriculum vitae, how to face a job interview) and help people to understand the world of work and the labour market context where they live and to acquire and initiate active job search techniques.

B. Learning and practicing transversal competencies to support practitioners' activities

The issue of transversal competencies of career counsellors and other professions involved in career guidance/counselling and related activities and training programmes, is of considerable interest to better support vocational/career guidance and counselling activities and also training, especially the professional equipment, motivation and self-empowerment.

It is fundamental on the one hand to reflect and give cultural and social meaning to their experiences, on the other to better understand the dynamics of the phenomena and context where they work.

1. **Awareness and strengthening of transversal competencies** is suggested to be a strong part of the equipment of operators in order to be able to approach with empathy the difficulties and personal challenges of the counselees, highlighting that this cannot be based only on a generic attitude toward the others, but it requires adequate skills and competencies. (INSUP - AKI Project)

Set of Transversal Competencies suggested by Aki Project (www.aki-app.org; <https://www.aki-mobility.org/>)

Open-mindedness (Showing evidence of curiosity; Respecting various opinions, taking diversity into consideration)

Adaptation to change (Approaching change, provide oneself the necessary resources for adaptation, Committing to change)

Interpersonal relations (Relating to others/Actively listen to others, operating in a group, Enhancing one's dispositions to networking)

Sense of responsibility (Understanding one's environment before taking action /Take into account the resources and constraints of the environment; Taking action mindfully of others; Problem solving)

Self-confidence (Recognising one's strengths and limits; Asserting oneself, developing one's ability to take action)

2. **Training and practical experiences** on transversal competencies and self-empowerment are highly suggested to be provided (also through non-formal and informal learning). In addition to being an important way to reinforce personal key resources of professionals, to be able to directly experience the usefulness of these competencies improves awareness of one's ability for their own work performance, qualification and satisfaction.
3. **Career guidance counsellors and practitioners' competencies**, essential in working with vulnerable target groups, need to be based on active listening, on the building of a strong

relationship between the operator and the person they work with, to develop trust and commitment towards individual paths and transitions (INSUP - AKI Project)

4. In order to address with effectiveness and resiliency the variety of demanding and challenging needs of the target populations (psychological issues, qualifications aspects, training and searching for a job, etc.), **it is possible to integrate and adapt practices coming from different contexts and applications**, concerning: working in team with other professionals, networking, peer and expert support (e.g. supervision), and self-care (ASPIC Integrative approach).
5. Training and orientation actions aimed at practitioners and operators in career guidance and counselling should include the acquisition of knowledge and development of competencies useful for enhancing and assessing the competencies of their target groups, **having a better access to existing European tools to help them** (EU skills Profile tool, European Agenda for Adult Education guide, Upskilling pathways...) and to identify and retrieve existing resources from a variety of sources.

C. Implement tailored approaches and tools for the identification and validation of knowledge, skills, qualifications and work experience of refugees and asylum seekers

To increase readiness for entering the labour market, employability and capacity for adjustment and integration, it is useful to provide conditions that give the possibility from an early stage, to identify, maintain, skills, aptitudes, and qualifications, to narrate their work experience, in order to redefine their social identity, and at the same time to know the characteristics of the world of work of the place where they would like to live.

The exchange of practices and experiences between Social Self-I partners put in evidence the potential benefits of optimising existing traditional and standard procedures for identification, validation and recognition of competences and qualifications, ensuring quality of methodologies and tools, and their consistency with specific goals.

1. In order to facilitate the process of talking about oneself, experience acquired, skills possessed, the context where they have been acquired, transforming skills and resources from tacit to explicit it is important to take into account language proficiency (**linguistic gaps and cultural differences**) related with the great variety of situations of “communication” and interaction both within the career guidance relationship and in the broad social environment. (HdBA – CMinaR project). Language skills of operators can also be enhanced.
2. Provide people with the possibility to make a smooth transition, to keep memory of one’s skills, experience and identity, transferring and “translating” resources to be unfolded in the new environment.
3. One of the main dimensions to work on and tackle is the related one to the “**knowledge gap**” arising in the career guidance and counselling situation, from both sides, the practitioner and the *counselee*. One of these gaps concerns basic information on the educational systems of the refugees’ countries of origin and lack of knowledge on the qualifications and opportunities of work in the host country (HdBA – CMinaR project). Recommendations concerning mutual knowledge gaps cover following topics (Conrads, Kohn, Weber, 2020):
 - a. Immigration from third countries, including forced migration, will continue to bring labour force and educational potential to Europe in the future. It is important to raise the human capital of each refugee and to find a fit for it in the relevant hosting system.
 - b. Characteristic features of the education system of the countries of origin as well as their political frameworks substantially determine the qualification level of refugee groups. Simple comparisons based on qualification levels lead to false conclusions.

- c. Refugees' educational aspiration is high and positively connected with their socio-economic status. Given worthy educational aspirations, the young age structure of refugees and the aging of local residents enable a undeniable integration potential.
 - d. Counselling is to be understood as a support in problem-solving processes. Emotional and content aspects play equally large roles in this context. Counsellors need flight-specific, professional knowledge in order to understand, evaluate and develop the situation of and possible solutions for refugees.
 - e. Refugees with a high level of human capital need appropriate information on different educational and career paths. Their objectives should be specified and transferred into action plans. Counselling with refugees concerns the handling of frustration, the prevention of resignation, or the development of short-term perspectives.
 - f. Refugees with human capital being difficult to assess need more attention when identifying existing educational resources. These are often informal. Appropriate tools can facilitate the identification and application of informally acquired competences.
 - g. Refugees with a low level of human capital and too high expectations need emotional and content-related support, as well as attention when developing realistic goals.
 - h. Addressing complex challenges requires a deeper involvement with the person and the situation of ad-vice-seeking refugees. Counsellors therefore need support during further professionalization. In dynamically developing markets, a modernized counselling to integrate new groups of persons is a key factor for the future.
4. A deeper understanding of the processes and implications of forced migration itself **is necessary to gain the crucial empathy for people** (see above) who went through a variety of difficulties and to understand in which situation they are living at the time of entry into the host country.
 5. **In order to overcome the lack of documentation** it is suggested to integrate formal procedures and standards provided by the validation systems of the different countries with *ad hoc* procedures which may allow to identify and enhance non-formal and informal learning, through appropriate evaluation and validation methods and tools. (EOPPEP - recognition procedures).
 6. **Recognition processes** addressed to refugees and asylum seekers can be improved and become more **multilingual and culturally sensitive**. Already existing and applied practices, delivering reliable and valid results, include **visual based learning and simulation tools**, assessing vocational competences in action fields, which, becoming more quick and affordable, may allow to be scaled up to a large number of clients and possible contexts of application (MYSKILLS - assessment tool).

7. **Efficient labour market supports**, specific guidance and diversified tools for the target groups, to have access to a broad range of existing proved existing methods and tools, and their adaptation to the particular needs.
8. **Potential role of early identification of competencies and personal resources to provide** people with the possibility to make a smooth transition, to keep memory of one's skills, experience and identity, transferring and "translating" resources to be unfolded in the new environment.

D. Challenges and resources in working with vulnerable target populations (with experiences of forced migration, psychological and health issues, and trauma)

The ability to understand the needs of vulnerable target populations means working to respond adequately and respectfully to the individuality of each person.

In this perspective it is possible to improve, for this target of population (vulnerable people, low skilled, refugees, etc.) physical, cultural and cognitive tools to overcome the challenge of the society, and to increase the possibility to live independently in the world of work; this means to offer specific support and psychological counselling pathways adapted to the presenting problems.

1. Whereas discrimination and trauma may have a strong impact on the counselling process and communication, on the expectations, adjustment capacity and career progression of refugees, it is strongly advisable that career guidance practitioners undertake training to understand the implications for the guidance activity, goals and outcomes and to cope with very challenging cases which they may never have experienced before.
2. Although trauma may have been experiences, to associate the refugee of asylum seeker condition necessarily with trauma is limiting (Papadopoulos, 2006; Cabras, 2017) and prevents from recognising the broad range of experiences, coping strategies and conditions. Practitioners can focus and build on resources and skills providing valuable and empowering feedback to the counselees.
3. Practitioners can improve their competencies through education, training, supervision and practicing. Moreover, they can increase their ability to recognise stress in the counselees, and make adjustments to procedures, while at the same time be aware of limits of the career counselling intervention and make referrals to appropriate service providers for specialised

support. To minimise the consequences of being exposed to vicarious stress it is advisable for them to obtain supervision or training in stress management and self-care practices.

4. Creating trust and respect in the relationship between practitioner and individual, while maintaining adequate boundaries, facilitates a good guidance and counselling process aimed at empowering the resources and strengths of the counsees.
5. The awareness and recognition of the interdependence of actions at different stages and places of the reception and integration makes possible for different actors to provide people with the possibility to make a smooth identity transition, to keep memory of one's identity, work experience while "translating" and transferring skills and potentials into the new environment.
6. A long waiting time during the asylum procedure and of lack of appropriate educational, cognitive and affective conditions inputs make even more challenging to help people make vocational choices, adjusting to work at the country of destination and residence despite even the more sophisticated tools and processes. Thus, early support and actions can facilitate and contribute to successful interventions even at later stages of the reception and integration processes.

E. A broad perspective and multi-stakeholder, multilevel approaches in designing inclusive paths to facilitate transition to education and work

To achieve success and sustainability of results and goals attained in vocational guidance and career counselling intervention/services it is necessary that a variety of stakeholders be involved and engaged to create the conditions that make possible the actualisation of intentions and potentialities. The process of building welcoming communities and inclusive work environment calls for the involvement and commitment of institutions at all levels, of all sectors of economy, educational and VET institutions.

It will also benefit from the cooperation between a variety of institutions at all levels, such as local communities, civil society, employers, educational and VET institutions.

Some promising actions were identified to be promoted:

1. Joint actions between organisations, agencies and networks involved in social and labour inclusion toward finding and implementing the best feasible solutions to achieve a successful integration.

2. Awareness raising and welcoming capacity building among communities, local institutions, employers, especially to provide awareness raising and capacity building of employers in welcoming and supporting the implementation of existing programs and of those to be developed.
3. To recognise, support and develop existing resources in the community. In that respect we can recognise the valuable role of Libraries in promoting foundation skills enhancement, inclusion and integration (Luisa Marquardt, University Roma Tre; Library initiatives by ASPIC Lavoro; adoption by IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) of the Sustainable Development Goals of UN Agenda 2030 toward building more inclusive societies.
4. Reflecting on the impact of good practices it is possible to take a broader perspective and extend these considerations beyond the adult vulnerable target groups and consider the current relevant issue of integrating minors (both with family and unaccompanied) and their reception and integration.
5. To invest in vocational guidance, skills practice and career guidance and counselling as important means to favour integration and inclusion. Early support and identification of knowledge, skills, work experience, education, qualification may facilitate the processes of relocation and re-distribution by optimising the existing tools and procedures, transferring practices across sectors, and creating connections between local communities, sectors of economy and education institutions. The actual possibility for some people to cultivate a personal talent, to receive education, to have the possibility to create an independent life, can additionally leverage motivation in considering destinations which may prove to be receptive and welcoming and able to provide concrete education, training and job opportunities.
6. Matching between occupational needs and work opportunities at local and regional level and skills and resources brought by people – finding space for valuing personal talent, aptitudes and potentialities.

This deliverable has been developed by the Social SELF-I Transnational Project Team

Editorial Supervision: Gabriella Di Francesco

Main contributors: Prof. Dr. Ralph Conrads, Anne Larramendy, Ekaterini Anagnostopoulos



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ATTACHMENT 1

Main projects and tools exchanged and practiced within the Partnership

- **AKI project** - Assessment and recognition of transversal competences, acquired by young adults in international mobility projects, as a means to facilitate their socio-professional inclusion (INSUP).

www.aki-app.org; <https://www.aki-mobility.org>

- **CMinaR Teaching career counsellors for refugees (HdBA).**

CMinaR - Delphi Broadband Survey

<https://www.cminar.eu>

“Counselling for Refugee and Migrant Integration into the Labour Market – Development of Courses for Higher Education and Public Employment Services”. An Erasmus+ co-funded project CMinaR aiming at developing Higher Education courses and courses for practitioners of counselling to teach and train (future) counsellors in educational and vocational guidance for their work with refugee clients.

- **Lifelong Career Development Portal for adults – E-Stadiodromia (EOPPEP)**

<http://www.e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr>

- **LdVTOI project INNO-CAREER**

<http://www.inno-career.com/>

- **MYSKILLS. Identifying professional competencies (BKE)**

[https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/careers-via-competences/project-news/immigration-counseling-for-adult-immigrants/;](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/careers-via-competences/project-news/immigration-counseling-for-adult-immigrants/)

[https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/topics/latest-news/2018/maerz/myskills-new-test-makes-professional-knowledge-visible/\)](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/topics/latest-news/2018/maerz/myskills-new-test-makes-professional-knowledge-visible/)

- **RéAGIR: Réseau d'Accompagnement Global et Individualisé des Réfugiés (INSUP)**

(www.insup.org); relevant projects shared and presented by invited experts.

[https://www.insup.org/dossier-thematique/projet-reagir-insup-formation-laureats-de-lappel-a-projets-national-pour-lintegration-professionnelle-des-refugies/\)](https://www.insup.org/dossier-thematique/projet-reagir-insup-formation-laureats-de-lappel-a-projets-national-pour-lintegration-professionnelle-des-refugies/)

- **Integrative Pluralistic Model (ASPIC)**

<https://www.aspiclavoro.it/aspic-lavoro-english-version/our-methodology.html>

<http://www.aspicarsa.it/>

EU Tools

EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals

<https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>

Europass tools <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

OECD – PIAAC Survey

Education & Skills online assessment

<http://www.oecd.org/skills/ESonline-assessment/abouteducationskillsonline/>

IFLA – (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions)

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the role of libraries

<https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development>

Projects, tools and methodologies presented and shared by invited experts

ROMA TRE UNIVERSITY, Rome – Department of Education Science

Chair of Bibliography and Biblioteconomy, Prof. Luisa Marquardt

“Biblioteca In-Formazione ed Espressione del Sé 2018-2019” - Project in cooperation with Centro Studi Scuola Pubblica and University Roma Tre with Centro per il Libro e la Lettura (Cepell)/Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (Mibact), and the Library Papillon in Rebibbia Prison in Rome.

The workshops presented were addressed to both inmates and students of ROMA TRE University, consisted in creative writing and bibliographic references search to promote literacy, writing skills, search and use/processing of information to enhance cooperation skills, sense of responsibility and belonging, self-perception, self-esteem and individual wellbeing.

CIES – SOFeL

<https://www.cies.it/sofel/>

LIME, Labour Integration for migrants’ employment

<https://www.cies.it/progetti/lime-labour-integration-for-migrants-employment/>

MateChef

<https://www.cies.it/progetti/matechef/>

IQ Netzwerk Baden-Württemberg

(<https://www.iq-network.de/>)

INAPP

The Job and Qualifications Atlas

<https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/>

PROGRAMMA INTEGRA

<http://www.programmaintegra.it>

REC – Professional skills’ development for recognition and validation of informal and non-formal competences learning of migrants and refugees & labour market inclusion

REVaLUE – Refugees Empowerment through VET in an inclusive Europe

Web site: <https://erasmuspro.wixsite.com/revalue>

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NETWORKING



One key scope of “Social Self-I” is to keep promoting and developing knowledge, practices exchange and empowerment. As stated in the Indire Studies for the Impact of strategic partnership for innovation projects “The end of the project is the beginning”.

Contact

Katerina Anagnostopoulos
Project Manager-Coordinator
Communication and dissemination
E-mail: cosmopolis@libero.it