

NEWSLETTER

December 2020 - Issue 2

Introduction

Welcome once again to the Euroguidance Malta Newsletter - the second newsletter issued within the remit of the National School Support Services (NSSS), Ministry for Education.

Since the launching of our first newsletter, in March 2020, the world has seen a lot of changes. The pandemic has disrupted and changed the lives of the global population. In fact to determine the impact of the pandemic on guidance services in education or labour market sectors, the OECD together with a number of international organisations developed and distributed a **global survey**. The Euroguidance Malta Centre took an active role in encouraging the Maltese guidance community to participate in the survey. We now look forward to the publication of the report as it will provide a snapshot of how guidance services have changed, developed and adapted globally due to Covid-19.

In Malta the pandemic certainly left its impact. We have seen schools close down in March and now open again and operating under COVID restrictions. This scenario has impacted on career guidance provision, but at the same time, on a positive note, has challenged our practitioners to come up with new ways of delivering career guidance to our clients. The use of online one-to-one and group sessions on Microsoft Teams, telephone guidance sessions, webinars and online info sessions with outside entities, in particular post-secondary institutions and employers, besides other innovative ways of reaching out to both parents and students were evident in our work.

In this edition of the newsletter you will find information about a number

of milestones reached by the Euroguidance Malta Centre. Indeed, one of the long awaited initiatives organised this year was the Conference entitled **"The National Career Exposure Experience (CEE): Linking education with the world of work"** where career guidance practitioners, employers and educators had the opportunity to reflect on the one week career exposure experience organised for Year 11 students. Another milestone reached during the pandemic was the development and printing of the **pictorial version of the Career Exposure Experience**. This was a coordinated effort between the Malta Career Guidance Association and the National Schools Support Services.

In this newsletter you will also find information about the **I Choose Fair** organised for our Year 11 students partly funded through EG MT and the training delivered by the international speaker Mr Ali Mahlodji entitled **Being a role Model in Hard Times**. Finally, you will also have the opportunity to learn about the research undertaken by one of our career guidance teachers who works at NSSS. This research formed part of her **Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development** course which is organised by the University of Malta.

We hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter!

The Euroguidance Malta Team

Josanne Ghirxi, Dorianne Gravina, Lorraine Grech Aquilina, Alan Camilleri & Dorianne Pawney.



Euroguidance website



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MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION

The National Career Exposure Experience (CEE): Linking education with the world of work



The Conference entitled “**The National Career Exposure Experience (CEE): Linking education with the world of work**” was organised on 4th March 2020 by the Euroguidance MT in collaboration with the National School Support Services, Ministry for Education and Employment. “The keynote speaker was Dr. Raimo Vuorinen who works as Project manager at the Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER) at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His keynote address was entitled “*The Career exposure experience - boosting young people’s understanding of jobs and careers*”

Dr Vuorinen referred to how the career exposure experience provides a link between the school, the community and working life. During the CEE, the students deepen their knowledge of the labour market by examining working life, labour market trends and different professions and by practicing job search. At the same time, they get insight into the industries, in the professions and entrepreneurship that interest them. By means of the CEE, employers can provide information on current and anticipated skills demand and competences that are based on realities of the labour market. The keynote also provided examples from other countries of national policies on the CEE, challenges associated with such initiatives and different ways of using ICT in organising local co-operation. The speaker also provided examples on how the experience, knowledge and feedback obtained by the learner during the CEE can further strengthen the links and relevance of the different subjects to the world of work and the impact of work-based learning on students’ employability skills. A panel discussion followed, where a number of stakeholders were engaged in a discussion about the career exposure experience and its impact on the young persons’ preparation for the world of work. The audience participated in the discussion by asking questions and sharing their experiences regarding the topic. Finally Workshops sessions ensued where participants were given the opportunity to discuss the theme in small groups.

Dorianne Gravina
Education Officer (Career Guidance)

‘Being a Role Model in Hard Times’

The Education Officers at NSSS had long been thinking about a training session with a difference, whereby the focus is not on sectorial and technical career guidance matters, but one whereby our practitioner, and also the student, as our client, are given the full attention about the respective well-being. Once again the Covid 19 period, which we are still going through, provided the right context for this training. The session was therefore given the title “**Being a role model in Hard Times**”. Our guest speaker – **Ali Mahlodji** – was the right choice for this training as through his life experience Ali conveyed a message

of hope and positivity – a message which is very relevant during the present times. We encourage you to have a look at the website developed by Ali and his team to get inspiration for career guidance work with your clients – <https://www.whatchado.com/en/>

Dorianne Gravina and Lorraine Grech Aquilina
Education Officers (Career Guidance)

The Development, Design and Printing of a Pictorial version of the Career Exposure Reflective Logbook for Year 10 (Form 4) students

Over the past years, EG MT had availed itself from EG funds to design and print reflective logbooks in order to assist students and enhance their reflection during their career guidance-related experiences within schools. One of these booklets, printed through EG funds was the ‘Career Exposure Student’s Reflective Logbook’ aimed specifically at Year 10 students.

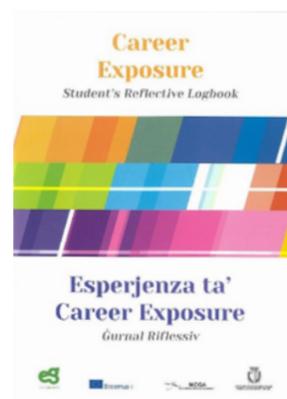
This reflective logbook is a logbook with a number of questions which the student reflects upon, and answers, during his participation in the career exposure experience (CEE). The CEE is a career guidance initiative whereby Year 10 students spend five (5) days at a place of work shadowing a job/career which they aspire for while at the same time they start understanding and becoming acquainted with the world of work even though they still attend compulsory schooling.

Although this logbook has been used successfully over a number of years, yet, career guidance practitioners, also noticed that while students with academic abilities were proceeding well in their reflection (and answering of questions), those with limited academic abilities were quite struggling and finding it hard to understand and fill-in this reflective journal. In view of this, the Malta Career Guidance Association (MCGA) thought about creating a simplified version of the Career Exposure Logbook, which is the *Pictorial version of the Career Exposure Reflective Logbook for Form 4 (Year 10 students)*.

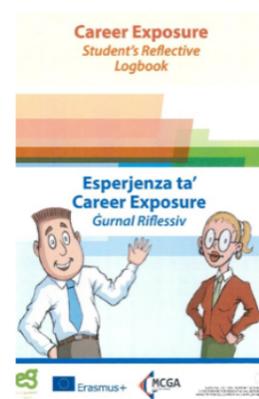
MCGA, in collaboration with the National School Support Services (NSSS) took care of the development, design and printing of this pictorial version of the ‘Career Exposure Reflective Logbook’. This logbook/reflective journal is specifically targeted for students with limited academic abilities and its pictorial representation means that it is more based on pictures and graphic representations instead of text. MCGA finalised this booklet <https://euroguidance.gov.mt/resources/#1586466675429-681094a3-83ce> and it will be used as an additional tool for both the student to facilitate his/her understanding during his/her experience and also for the career guidance practitioner in order to reach students with different abilities within the mainstream schooling context. By means of this booklet, MCGA and NSSS have reached another goal in becoming even more inclusive in our career guidance service given to students (and their parents).

Lorraine Grech Aquilina
Education Officer (Career Guidance)

The **mainstream** version of the Reflective logbook:



The **pictorial** version of the CEE Reflective logbook:



I Choose - Nagħzel il-Karriera Tiegħi

Against all odds!! Even the pandemic could not keep us away from organising our much awaited annual I Choose Fair for Year 11 students – an event also partly funded by Euroguidance. This fair has indeed become a yearly national event organised by the Ministry for Education for all State, Church and Independent School students and their parents/guardians. The fair provided another opportunity whereby our students could explore post-secondary options as they leave compulsory education. All post-secondary and tertiary institutions set up stand to inform and guide students about the qualifications required to follow the course/s of their interest. Students were also informed about the career opportunities they could aspire to and the qualities, attitudes and skills needed to work in different areas. Talks were delivered by professionals who work or teach in various subject areas. Career Guidance practitioners were also available to provide one-to-one guidance sessions to students to further guide them in their choice of educational and career path.

Despite the challenges associated with the organisation of the fair during this particular period, a different ambience was felt this year – highlighting a more personalised experience - as individual attention could be given to attendees due to the more controlled context that the pandemic situation demanded. Of course, one cannot fail to mention that a lot of attention was dedicated to following the health protocol procedures laid down by the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate. The event was held at the Grand Hotel Excelsior between 31st July and 1st August 2020.

Dorianne Gravina
Education Officer (Career Guidance)

Nisimgħek online career guidance sessions – our experience

By Career Guidance Teachers, NSSS

The year 2020 was very particular due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In March all schools were closed, and all teachers had to resort to remote teaching. During these particular circumstances, the National School Support Services (NSSS), the entity responsible for overseeing career guidance in state schools, felt the need to offer career guidance services to Year 11 students. This particular year group was targeted as these students were facing an important transition towards post-secondary education or employment, and it was clear that these students could not be left on their own. Besides a number of guidance teachers who voluntarily offered their services, the career guidance teachers at NSSS resorted to online one-to-one sessions with Year 11 students and their parents/guardians. Requests were made either by telephone or email. Sessions were delivered through Microsoft Teams. This service was developed and co-ordinated by our Education Officers (Career Guidance) at NSSS. Support for scheduling the sessions and connecting with students and their parents/guardians was provided by the clerical team at NSSS.

A number of outcomes resulted from these sessions. As career guidance teachers, we were satisfied that we helped students and parents/guardians during such challenging times. The response from students indicated that this service was really needed. In particular students mentioned that the ever-changing situation regarding examinations was overwhelming and created a source of stress. Added to this, students were also concerned about entry requirements to post-secondary institutions. This resulted in the importance of keeping ourselves updated with the information published by post-secondary institutions. We also attended a number of update sessions organized by our EOs so we made sure that we provided students with the latest information. At times we had to hold more than one session with the same student. Being on-line this proved easier to do. Education Officers also developed a consent form which included a set of guidelines to be followed during the sessions. Our interventions were not only meant to provide career information, but also focused on understanding the students’ concerns. The feedback we received from parents made us realize that even though the sessions were aimed at students, they also proved useful in putting parents’ minds at rest.

Although in general this experience was very positive, there were some difficulties. Poor internet connection proved to be a challenge. We also relied heavily on our listening skills and it was a challenge to keep up with the non-verbals of clients from the screen. Even though we could see the student, there was somewhat a physical barrier. At times, we had sessions with both parent and student simultaneously. This had its positive sides whereby we could pass on the same information to both. On the other hand, some students did not feel comfortable discussing with their parents overhearing, or at times taking control of the session.

This situation also presented us with an opportunity to get out of our comfort zone and explore new ways of working with clients remotely. It also helped us brush our IT skills and learn new ones. Such an experience helped us also to identify some points to improve future online sessions. For example, it would help if students were to indicate the nature of their query upon booking an online session. This would assist the practitioner in preparing for the session. Looking back, we realised that these sessions were quite demanding at times and it would help if we would avoid back-to-back sessions and allow an adequate time in between for logging of sessions.

The Career Guidance Services within NSSS is very satisfied with the positive feedback received by students and parents and would like to extend its gratitude towards a number of guidance teachers who also took part in this initiative in order to deliver an efficient, quality service to students and their parents.

Our experience creating online resources

By Career Guidance Teachers, National School Support Services



When schools closed down in March 2020, educators sought alternate means of reaching out to their students. As Career Guidance teachers, we found ourselves in the same situation and we looked for ways in which we could continue to give career guidance to our students, albeit in a different way than what we were used to.

We started out by discussing among ourselves different ideas on achieving our goal. We had meetings with Ms McNamara Director General (DES), together with Ms Ghirxi Director (NSSS), and Ms Gravina and Ms Grech Aquilina Education Officers (Career Guidance). We identified that the older year groups, in particular Year 11 students would be our priority for this particular period, considering the various limitations we had due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a team and under the direction of our Education Officers, we pinpointed the information which would need to be imparted to our Year 11 students under normal circumstances. We brainstormed various ways on how to pass on this information to our students. We considered the different needs present amongst them and we also consulted people specialised in the area, who guided us on how best to create resources which respected the needs of students with different abilities.

We then embarked on creating a number of infographics about each post-secondary institution in Malta and Gozo. We were in constant communication with representatives from these post-secondary institutions who were reviewing the information and suggesting amendments. All material was also verified and checked by our Education Officers before it was published. This was a very special year as entry requirements set by these institutions were being amended regularly due to the pandemic. We were very careful to give our students the correct and most up-to-date information.

Our main aim was to create infographics which were easily understood by each and every student. We therefore created resources both in Maltese and English and we tried to keep the information as simple as possible. Furthermore, we also created an audio version of all infographics in order to reach out more students. Our experience with students taught us how a lot of information can sometimes be overwhelming. We strived to provide them with appealing and easy to understand material, which was accurate and approved by the respective post-secondary institutions.

Every week our Education Officers, who were in communication with Heads of Schools, sent the infographics to all secondary schools. Schools would then upload these resources to their Facebook pages or send them by email to their students. We also uploaded these infographics on the Euroguidance website (Resources – To share! section) (<https://euroguidance.gov.mt/>) to be accessible for all: students, parents/guardians, educators, professionals and all those interested in post-secondary education. We have also created a video to help facilitate the Year 11 students' transition from compulsory schooling to post-secondary education/world of work. The "Next Step" video aimed at assisting individuals at various stages of their decision-making process. This can also be accessed on the Euroguidance website (Resources – Video gallery section).

This experience has helped us on a number of levels. We have seen the difference that we can make even though being physically apart from our students. This journey enhanced our creativity and uncovered qualities in us that we didn't know we had. We are glad that we embraced the challenge brought about with the pandemic and that the experience of launching these online resources, paved the way towards creating more similar online resources, such as, videos about different sectors and the respective career opportunities, etc, which shall be needed for the months to come since the pandemic is still present and the respective precautions stress the need for more online, rather than face-to-face communication with our students and their parents.

Life Beyond Pregnancy: Career Guidance Through The Eyes Of TEENAGE Mothers - A Qualitative Study by Catherine Portelli

I strongly believe that education is a powerful tool that can be used to bring about social justice to disadvantaged groups, including teenage mothers. This sets the ground for my interest in studying this minority group. Being a career guidance teacher at the National School Support Services and having implemented a career programme that is tailor-made for teenage mothers for the past four years, I became increasingly interested in exploring this area especially that which concerns adolescent mothers.

During adolescence, individuals must make a lot of decisions that affect their future. This is a time of turmoil, where teenagers develop their knowledge and skills, as well as manage their relationships and emotions. This study explored the various challenges experienced by teenage mothers. The framework used for this research consisted of the following theories: Super's Lifespan Theory, Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development and the Social Cognitive Career Theory. For some young mothers, the roles of child, student and homemaker as described in Super's Lifespan Theory prevail. During adolescence, most young mothers are still living at their parents' house, some are still studying or get into employment while, at the same time, they have the added responsibility of raising a child. Dealing with so many different roles is not an easy task, and it poses various challenges that might discourage the teenage mothers from studying or getting into employment.

To overcome these barriers, teen mothers must adopt coping strategies to be able to deal with their manifold roles. According to Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development, adolescents manage to acquire a strong sense of self only if they manage to deal with conflicts successfully. This brings into play the importance of support and encouragement from significant others which can help teenage mothers to find the right balance between being a mother, a student or worker and a teenager.

Given the right environment, the necessary skills and a strong self-efficacy

belief, young mothers can think about a future career. The Social Cognitive Career Theory focuses on the individual's expectations to gain success. This is where career guidance factors in. The career guidance practitioner's role is to provide a holistic service to different client groups and to help them make smooth transitions throughout their life.

For this study, a qualitative design was adopted. The qualitative paradigm allows for rich and detailed insights into what it is like to experience career guidance from a teenage mother's point of view. In this regard, Phenomenological Methodology is used to bring to light the lived experiences of teenage mothers regarding past or present career guidance. Data was collected by means of individual semi-structured interviews with eight young mothers who attended or still attend Servizz Ghożża (I care service). These mothers hailed from different parts of Malta and were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. All participants had one commonality: they had been pregnant when they were from fifteen to eighteen years old. All interviews were recorded and transcribed and subsequently translated into English. Thematic Analysis was used to help in identifying, processing and reporting patterns within the data collected from the transcripts of the recordings. The information was analysed, compared and discussed in the light of the literature review. Each interview provided a unique and rich account of all the obstacles, the coping strategies and the career guidance experience that helped teenage mothers to be resilient in so many different ways.

The findings revealed that the experience of having a child was not 'the end of the world' for the participants of this research study. On the contrary, this has enriched the lives of these young mothers as they have become more responsible, resilient and mature. This study investigated the different challenges faced by these mothers that interfered with studying or getting into employment and the coping strategies they adopted to be able to deal with their different roles.

All the participants in this study attended Servizz Ghożża, and although this organisation does not expose its clients to formal instruction, the young mothers stated that they felt supported and encouraged both in their role as mothers as well as students. Practitioners at this organisation help teenage mothers to find their way and start over from where they find it most suitable as they are fully aware of the situation in which the mothers are in at that particular time. It also emerged that this service is available even after teenage mothers stop attending Servizz Ghożża.

The group of eight mothers who participated in this study was not a homogeneous one since the girls came from different educational backgrounds. This exhibited itself in the participants' different trajectories and attitudes towards work or studying. It also appears that these teen mothers have different levels of career maturity, which is a fundamental concept in Super's theory. This group of adolescent mothers had different self-efficacy beliefs and they engaged in those activities that were coherent with their personal capabilities and expectations. Failing or succeeding in such activities helped the mothers to either reconfirm their own self-efficacy beliefs or forced them to find alternative routes. Some of the participants were in the process of achieving their goals whilst others were still searching for a career path. All the teen mothers had gone through tough experiences, and they all acknowledge that their significant others supported them in different ways.

Despite their differences, all the participants agreed that education is crucial in today's world as it paves the way to better employment opportunities. Some of the young mothers stated that education was the key to success as it made them more educationally equipped and more competitive in the workforce. Therefore, their education was also beneficial to their children as, ultimately, they will have better quality of life and more opportunities to succeed. For some teen mothers, their children were a source of inspiration and motivation as they encouraged them to be resilient and achieve their goals.

EG website and facebook

We urge you to access our Euroguidance webpage - <http://euroguidance.gov.mt/>

We also urge you to like our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Eurouguidance-Malta> and become part of the **Career Guidance Practitioner Support Group** – a private group for people from the education and employment sectors who work in the area of career guidance.

What will you gain?

- Access the latest information in relation to career guidance matters at European and national level, mobility opportunity initiatives and other resources you can use with your clients;
- Share with other practitioners any event related to career guidance you would like to publicise;
- Share concerns, queries and reflections with other guidance practitioners;
- Share any event you have organised with the local and international community.