

NEWSLETTER

December 2021 - Issue 4

Introduction

Welcome to the Euroguidance December 2021 edition of our bi-annual Newsletter!

The fourth Euroguidance Newsletter is being issued at a time when the current situation with regards to the Covid 19 pandemic is still alarming – with numbers increasing on a daily basis. Despite this dire situation, as career practitioners, we need to adopt a positive attitude towards the future and look ahead with optimism. This attitude needs to be transmitted to our clients – the young and older students, the young and older adults – who may be losing some hope in aspiring towards a career of their dreams due to the challenges that they and their families may be going through during this time.

In such times when access to information is so important and keeping in mind the limited opportunities for face to face meetings, the Euroguidance Malta Centre took the decision to dedicate time and resources to upgrade the Euroguidance website and include more information about lifelong guidance and international mobility, the addition of local and international resources and links to post-secondary institutions and other entities. All this material can be used by career guidance practitioners, educators, and parents/guardians to help students and young adults when choosing their career path. The information has been organised and presented in an easy, accessible manner to ensure that with a click of one to two buttons, one finds him/herself in the section which is of interest to him/herself. Have a look by accessing the following link: www.euroguidance.gov.mt.

This year our aim as a Centre, through our Euroguidance website, is to keep providing the latest information on mobility and lifelong career guidance to ensure that decisions taken are based on the right information. We also

plan to organise a number of training events. One such event will focus on career education and career guidance in our schools with the publication of the 'Career Learning and Development: A Framework for Schools'. More on this Conference and subsequent workshops in this issue. We also plan to work on the publication of a number of resources which can be useful to our young students. Our career guidance practitioners will be offered opportunities to participate in continuous professional development training opportunities of their choice related to lifelong career guidance.

We welcome you to read our Newsletter. A number of short articles will focus on events organised by Euroguidance MT during the year 2021 – The Employer-Education Stakeholder Forum, the Euroguidance National Conference and the participation of a number of colleagues in the Academia Training organised by Euroguidance Romania. Finally, as has now become the usual custom, you will also have the opportunity to learn about a research undertaken by one of our career advisors – Glen Cascun, Career Advisor, Maria Regina College. This research formed part of his Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development Course organised by the University of Malta.

We hope you enjoy reading this Newsletter!

Dorianne Gravina,
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Euroguidance MT



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MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION

The Employer – Education Stakeholders’ Forum



On Thursday 25th November 2021, Euroguidance Malta organised the fourth Stakeholders’ Forum. Representatives from the Education and Employment sectors discussed this year’s chosen theme, ‘The role of digitalisation in Career Guidance practice’. An international speaker, Dr Raimo Vuorinen, from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, delivered the keynote speech.

Dr Vuorinen started off his presentation by highlighting why it is important for countries to invest in career guidance. He highlighted that challenges such as the increasing use of automation, the transition towards a green economy, the need to recover from the pandemic and the new skills needed in today’s labour market as some of the drivers which justify this importance. He then went on to showcase how career guidance can make a difference by quoting an OECD study conducted in 2020 which shows that:

- Young people who participate in career development activities through their schooling can mostly, but not always, expect positive changes in their educational success and later working lives.
- Effective career development activities can help young people develop a better understanding of the relationship between education and employment, broaden their career aspirations and help them develop a more informed understanding of what they need to do in order to achieve their goals.
- Activities, including job shadowing and attending job fairs, are positively associated with a broader range of career aspirations.

The speaker also highlighted the added value of employer engagement for career guidance, namely that:

- Participation in work-based activities is connected to positive attitudes towards schooling and further successful transitions
- Direct contacts with people in work are a good complement to other types of guidance services
- Hands-on experience in the workplace help mitigate some negative stereotypes about different paths
- There seem to be benefits for future economic prospects

Dr Vuorinen then focused on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in organising local co-operation between stakeholders from the employment and education sectors. These may include pre-recorded videos, online job fairs, work-site visits and some more ambitious activities virtual career talks (job fair, classroom, year group presentation or a carousel format) and virtual work experience. An example of good practice from Finland relating to an online platform to manage the cooperation between schools and employers was outlined. This can be accessed on <https://peda.net/tet>.

This presentation led the way to the table discussions among stakeholders who participated on the day, whereby ways as to how the collaboration between Education and Employment stakeholders can be strengthened were discussed, together with how the use of digital tools can be further integrated within career guidance practice for the benefit of students and all career guidance service users.

Photographs taken at the event are uploaded on the Euroguidance website www.euroguidance.gov.mt

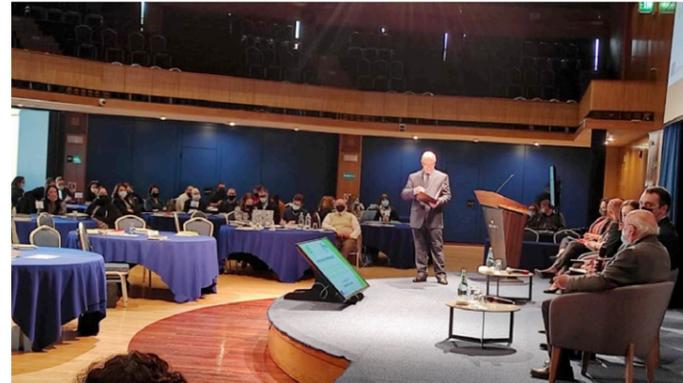
Euroguidance National Conference 2021

The National School Support Services (NSSS) in cooperation with the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) and the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), with the support of the Malta Career Guidance Association (MCGA), organised the national Euroguidance conference ‘Promoting the new Europass Portal and raising awareness of the importance of the Malta Qualification Framework with our service users’. The Conference took place on Thursday, 2nd December 2021 at the Dolmen Hotel, Qawra. This Conference

was financed by Euroguidance Malta under the Erasmus + Programme.

The conference gathered over 120 career practitioners – career advisors, guidance teachers and educators from the middle, secondary and post-secondary sectors and employment advisors from Jobsplus. The objective of the Conference was to exchange information and promote cooperation of all the actors in career guidance after a long period of physical absence because of the pandemic. Participants had the opportunity to gather information on the new Europass Portal, the Malta Qualification Framework/European Qualification Framework and the Malta Qualification Recognition Information Centre.

Photographs taken at the event are uploaded on the Euroguidance website www.euroguidance.gov.mt.



Career Learning and Development: A Framework for schools (UPCOMING EVENT)

How can we help students understand themselves and the environment in which they live so they are better equipped to decide on their education, training and/or work pathways?

This framework, developed by Dorianne Gravina, EO, Career Guidance and Stephen Camilleri, EO, Personal, Social and Development was published by Euroguidance Malta and can be accessed on <https://euroguidance.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Career-learning-and-development.pdf>

It is intended to be a referral point for schools and colleges to help professionals support the planning, design and delivery of career education and career guidance. It aims to establish guidelines for career learning and development in compulsory schooling and achieve better co-ordination between all educators involved – hence acknowledge and encourage a whole school approach to career learning. It also aims to serve as a tool which helps evaluate and improve the quality of career learning in our schools.

The framework is based on different international models but reflects the needs of Maltese schools and colleges. It adopts a student-centered approach to career learning – thus emphasising the importance of providing the right space where students can gain understanding, knowledge and skills but also opportunities for reflection and evaluation that help students make better sense of what they have learnt, link new knowledge with previous knowledge, question previously taken for granted assumptions and thus accommodate new ideas and beliefs. The framework identifies 9 competences within 3 areas of learning to facilitate learners’ personal and career development, namely:

1. Personal exploration and management competences
2. Learning exploration and management competences
3. Career exploration and management competences

The 3 learning areas are applicable for the following learning cycles:

1. The Primary School Years (Year 3 – 6)
2. The Middle School Years (Year 7 – 8)
3. The Senior School Years (Year 9 – 11)

The framework also includes a set of benchmarks for effective career learning and development. It provides schools with a practical tool for self-assessing careers provision and also opportunities for developing an action plan for improvement. The aim is that of assisting service providers to reflect and evaluate their work by adopting a ‘reflective practitioner’ approach.

The four categories that need to be reflected upon are:

1. The Career Education Programme
2. The Career Guidance Provision
3. The Whole School approach
4. The teachers and career guidance practitioners

This framework will be discussed during a Conference which will be held in April 2022 where, College Principals, Heads of Schools, PSCD teachers, career guidance practitioners, employer representatives and the Teachers’ Unions will be invited to discuss this framework and to explain their involvement in the process. Together with a foreign keynote speaker and local participants we want to discuss the value of the framework, how it complements the already existing structure of career education and guidance and how to encourage input from the different stakeholders.

Following this Conference, we will hold 4 workshops where we will discuss in depth how the framework can be implemented in the schools. These workshops are planned for November 2022.

E-ACADEMIA Romania - Guidance and Counselling Training in Relation to the Revised Competencies Framework

Attended and written by Career Advisors Thomas Camilleri & Jessica Borg

Euroguidance (EG) Romania have organised an E-Academia training to offer an extensive insight into the career guidance and counselling services offered by Romanian institutions within the Brasov region. The training took place virtually, between the 21st and 24th of September 2021. Eight practitioners were chosen from the Euroguidance Network, with each country nominating two practitioners to participate in this training opportunity. Due to COVID-19 concerns and after consultations with the registered participants, EG Romania has decided to opt for a virtual training to safeguard the health and safety of the participants.

In the initial stages of this training opportunity, the participants were asked to prepare a short presentation about themselves, their professional background, as well as a good practice which they implemented during the pandemic, in their respective place of work. Furthermore, EG Romania have prepared a virtual tour of Brasov (a city in the Transylvania region), to fully immerse the participants in the culture and contextual background of this e-academia training. The participants were also offered an opportunity to e-visit a public and a private school.

We, as participants of this training, had ample amount of time to meet with the students attending these schools, as well as their teachers and career counsellors. The trust and connection between the students and their career counsellors were both very palpable and touching, which made us reflect on the positive impact career guidance has on students.

Furthermore, we were also exposed to many educational projects which are being implemented. Some of the projects which are worth mentioning are; the one against Cyber bullying, with mindfulness practices and weekly surveys to check-in with students during the pandemic; as well as the one where practitioners reach out to disadvantaged at-risk students as a means to re-engage them back into the educational system.

The professionals present observed, that even if we live in such different contexts, all practitioners were working on similar initiatives to provide quality career guidance to students. Additionally, it was also interesting to see how even if this pandemic led to isolation, most of the practitioners were dealing with similar issues and with equally similar solutions as we strive to foster care, self-awareness, and community amongst our students. This training was a good learning opportunity to further develop our competences as Career Guidance Practitioners, as well as to network with other professionals within the same field.

Site visit at Methode Electronics Inc.

by Career Advisors Jessica Borg & Ann Julene Hili



Information about the Site

With sales, engineering, and manufacturing locations in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Methode Electronics Inc. is a major global supplier of custom-engineered solutions. They create mechatronic items by designing, engineering, and manufacturing them. Transportation (including automotive, commercial vehicle, e-bike, aerospace, bus and rail), cloud computing infrastructure, construction equipment, consumer appliances, and medical devices are among the end markets they cater for.

Aims of the Visit

Thanks to the long-standing collaboration between the Malta Career Guidance Association (MCGA), the National School Support Services/Euroguidance Malta, and Methode Electronics Inc., the MCGA committee members attended a productive visit at Methode Electronics Inc. on the 8th of July 2021. The aim was to understand the current state of affairs between educational institutions and the industry, as well as to reinforce our partnership with Methode Electronics Inc. as a means to extend our future collaboration for the benefit of our students. The discussions focused on the company’s operations, training and development opportunities, different career paths and innovation. It was interesting to discover that the company employs individuals at different levels ranging from operators, technicians, engineers, supervisors and managers, amongst others. There were also many other career prospects, besides the technical aspect of manufacturing the products, including sales, marketing to launch new products in the market, legal department, HR department, consultancy etc. While touring around the factory, it was also empowering to observe that there was a positive gender representation in all areas of the plant.

Discussion on Industry 4.0

Interesting insight about the industry stemmed from fruitful conversation amongst the different professionals present during the visit. We delved into the implications of Industry 4.0 which represents the fourth industrial revolution. Industry 4.0 refers to the new and improved automated machines thanks to the integration of intelligent systems, the internet of things and that of systems, which permits all machines to be connected to each other and share information via the internet (Sinopoli, 2017; Marr, 2018). This enables more efficient ways of production, real time optimisation, creativity, innovation, and less waste (Marr, 2018). All these improved systems require minimal or no human interaction with the machines. This led to a consequential transition which requires less hands-on manual labour and more technical and technological savvy workers.

Reflections on the Implications of Industry 4.0

This shift in the manufacturing industry has led companies to face many challenges in order to rise-up to the occasion. Methode Electronics Inc. gave us vast examples of how they adopted creativity and innovation, by showing us the different parts they developed, as a means to remain competitive in the local and international market. On the other hand, the career guidance professionals present during the visit had many questions on how their human resources remain relevant in the labour market.

Methode Electronics Inc. officials explained that manufacturing industries are experiencing skills bottleneck when employing at technical levels. A study by McGuinness, Pouliakas and Redmond (2019), attempted to measure the skills-displacing technological change (SDT) which refers to the technological adaptations that may render employees’ skills obsolete. Despite the perception that SDT contributes to the deskilling of jobs, this study found that SDT is encouraging upskilling of employees (McGuinness, Pouliakas and Redmond, 2019). Furthermore, McGuinness, Pouliakas and Redmond (2019) found that SDT is predominantly affecting high-skilled workers in terms of incongruent upskilling opportunities by employers.

Methode Electronics Inc. are training new and potential staff, by organising training courses, upskilling of current staff as well as outsourcing foreign labour. Outsourcing and offshoring of jobs has become a very common trend due to the adoption of new technologies as well as the upskilling and deskilling debate (Baruch, 2004). Finally, we concluded that efforts must be made to empower the local labour market, policy makers as well as the manufacturing industry, to focus on the importance of valorising technical and vocational work in our Maltese context. This was an eye-opening visit which will help us guide better our clients.

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Exploring the Career Guidance Needs of Male Sub-Saharan Immigrants in the Labour Market

Glen Cascun



Introduction

Career guidance for immigrants is an important service to society. It can assist in social justice (IAEVG, 2015), inclusion (Sultana, 2010) and in mitigating unemployment and filling employment pockets (Ajufu, 2013), thereby satisfying labour market demands. For immigrants, it can significantly contribute to their positive transition into the new country. Sub-Saharan immigrants face different barriers during labour market integration, this makes them severely disadvantaged compared to local people.

This research explores experiences of Sub-Saharan Africans in Malta, while trying to integrate in the labour market. This research aims to understand how barriers can be overcome to support their integration. Individual face-to-face in-depth interviews with eight men of Sub-Saharan origins were conducted to explore their experiences. This study examines how self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals are affected by barriers and environmental factors immigrants face, while trying to access the labour market.

Methodology

I used an interpretivist approach in this study. I used this approach to capture the participants' experiences, perceptions and feelings in their efforts to integrate in the labour market. I conducted eight individual semi-structured interviews in order to understand the immigrants' perspective (Sugarman, 2001). I transcribed the interviews and used thematic analysis to generate findings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The aspects of validity, reliability, reflexivity and ethics were all given importance throughout the research project.

Barriers in Accessing Education and Employment

The research highlights two main aspects for immigrant labour market integration. These are as follows: The barriers immigrants face to access the labour market and the support they have found to access the labour market.

From the research conducted, there seem to be several barriers faced by immigrants to integrate into the labour market being new to a country. These include the lack of income, lack of certification, lack of information, racism, abuse, documentation and language. Immigrants find various solutions to be able to integrate into the labour market notwithstanding these barriers. The majority of those interviewed explained how they were lost in the new system, further commented that they needed help to navigate through an employment market that was alien to them. They also said how career guidance would have helped them to take the necessary steps for labour market integration.

Overcoming Barriers

Despite several barriers affecting the integration of immigrants into the labour market, a high level of self-efficacy was important for labour market integration. For instance, there were some participants who explained that they could not speak the language; however, they managed to find work and learn English later on the job to be able to communicate.

During the research it was noted that upon their arrival in Malta,

immigrants did not have someone to guide them through the process of employment. Many of them learned this by trial and error. However, they explained that some organisations such as JRS (Jesuit Refugee Services) and AWAS (Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers) had social workers who guided them through the process.

Furthermore, a very important finding is the pressure on immigrants to earn money as early as possible. In fact, the literature pointed out that the earliest immigrants are working the quicker they become integrated (DeBono, 2013). However, this makes it more difficult for immigrants to take the educational route: two participants explained how they had commenced education and had to choose between making a living and education. They ended up choosing employment since they could not cope without income since they did not have support from their family.

Recommendations

1. Holistic Integration Plan. It is recommended that when a person arrives in Malta, an integration plan is set up with a career guidance professional. Career guidance professionals can further refer clients to the appropriate services or NGOs for further support.
2. Recognition of prior learning. An important factor highlighted in this research is that some immigrants have experience in different employment sectors. However, when they wanted to access the same sector they have found it a very difficult task. This is owed to them lacking certification to prove their experience: usually, they cannot provide the certification having left the same behind or it being destroyed in looting or other situations in their country of origin.
3. Career guidance services for immigrants and trained guidance practitioners. Career guidance services are key for the integration of Sub-Saharan immigrants into the labour market. Support from a professional aim to provide the immigrants with the required information, helping in making better decisions, tackling certification issues, working on interviewing skills, CV writing and in helping immigrants access education.
4. Outreach programmes. Another issue that emerged during this study is the need for immigrants to connect with the local community. For outreach to take place, both the professionals and the authorities need to think outside the box and look beyond traditional means of outreach.
5. Access to information. Although several participants said they had received information from different professionals, it was clear that much of the information received came from different sources. This does not mean that the information received was incorrect; but it shows the possible lack of an organised system.

Conclusion

This study shows how several barriers and challenges – such as language, stress, lack of certification and lack of information – make it difficult for Sub-Saharan immigrants to integrate into the local labour market. However, with their resolve, hard work and self-efficacy, several such immigrants manage to access the labour market.

Additionally, this research uncovers the reality that more organised career guidance services are required to support the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Most individuals who participated in this research found sporadic information and help from varied sources. Without proper organised services such as integration plans, language courses, recognition of prior learning, provisions to information and support in difficult situations, Sub-Saharan immigrants might face the risk of remaining marginalised in the Maltese society.

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