

Project Summary „Skills for Life - Orientation Toolbox for Life Design“

Context

Due to high **youth unemployment**, increased **skills mismatches** and school **drop-outs** in many EU Member States, career guidance for students finishing their compulsory education is receiving considerable attention – even more so since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, experience shows that effective orientation needs to start earlier to permit equal opportunities and informed decisions among all young people concerning their educational and professional future, helping them to find a pathway that suits them.

In many countries, students as young as 13-14 have to choose whether they will continue in “general” education, focus on specific areas or go into vocational training. Already from this young age, they have to make important choices, which will affect their future career options. But how can these young people make such informed decisions? And who is there to help them make these very important, life-determining choices? Mainly parents, career guidance counsellors and teachers. Yet, educational staff often should be better equipped to provide career orientation to this age group, who at this stage in their lives would not benefit from specific career guidance services. What they require most are so-called “**Life Design Skills**”, i.e. the knowledge, mindset and skills they will need to make informed choices concerning their education, and thereafter to develop their professional lives in a labour market that will primarily be characterised by change.

Project Objective

To contribute to young people’s preparedness, the specific objective of this Strategic Partnership, co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme, is thus to empower teachers, youth workers, career guidance providers (‘educators’) to teach Life Design Skills to young people. Between October 2020 and March 2023, the project consortium consisting of the **Goethe-Institut (DE)**, **Aliseo Liguria (IT)**, **Scoala de Valori (RO)**, **Tracé Brussel (BE)** and the **City of Mannheim (DE)**, works towards this objective primarily by developing an ‘**Orientation Toolbox for Life Design**’ ready to use for educators. The **BIBB** - German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (DE) completes the consortium as an associated partner.

The **Skills for Life Toolbox** is jointly developed by all project partners who pilot it with approximately 500 educators and 10,000 students in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Romania. It is composed of:

- An **on-line self-evaluation tool** to help students discover their strengths, weaknesses, priorities, interests and personality types, as well as to start considering how these may relate to different professional profiles

- A **board game**, available both offline and on-line, to help students match their own characteristics and those of different job profiles and economic sectors in a playful way
- A **series of teaching modules** that educators can easily implement in their respective teaching environment, enhancing the awareness and skills of the students
- A **half-day training to teach educators** to deliver these activities, also available as on-line training modules
- A user-friendly **impact assessment methodology** that will enable educators to measure the impact and efficacy of their interventions

All of the project tools will be freely **accessible** on-line in five languages: Dutch, English, German, Italian and Romanian, and will be designed for easy usage beyond language and cultural barriers. Important experiences and insights from piloting the toolbox will be channelled to policy-makers when seen feasible by the project consortium, thereby highlighting actions and **policies** that support effective early-stage career orientation and Life Design Skills for young people.

The Toolbox will be jointly implemented by all project partners who will use the toolbox as part of their regular activities and promote its use by local stakeholders. Furthermore, there will be **dissemination** activities aimed at school directors, educators, counsellors, local authorities, Chambers of Commerce and other stakeholders concerned with youth employment.

Expected Outcomes

The Skills for Life Toolbox will:

- **empower teachers, youth workers, career counsellors** and other educational staff to deliver effective pre-career guidance to young people aged 13-14 across Europe
- **empower young people** to choose an educational pathway that will lead them into employment that suits them
- provide young people with the **skills** they need on their way towards autonomous adulthood and a working environment characterised by change

Moreover, the project will raise **awareness** – among local, regional, national and European stakeholders – of the need to introduce guidance and orientation to students at a younger age, and will promote its outputs as an efficient and effective means of meeting this need.

In the longer term, this project will help to **bridge the gap between education systems and a labour market** in constant evolution. As a result, young people will be better prepared to envisage their future, to seize new opportunities and be more resilient to constant change and continuous transitions.

“Skills for Life – Orientation Toolbox for Life Design” will make a contribution not only to more fulfilling careers for young people, but also to a more innovative and competitive European economy.