

Career Guidance in the Digital Era. The Changing Role of School Counsellors and the Value of Competence Frameworks

A Professional and Cultural Erasmus+ Learning Experience

Larnaca, Cyprus, June 16–17, 2025

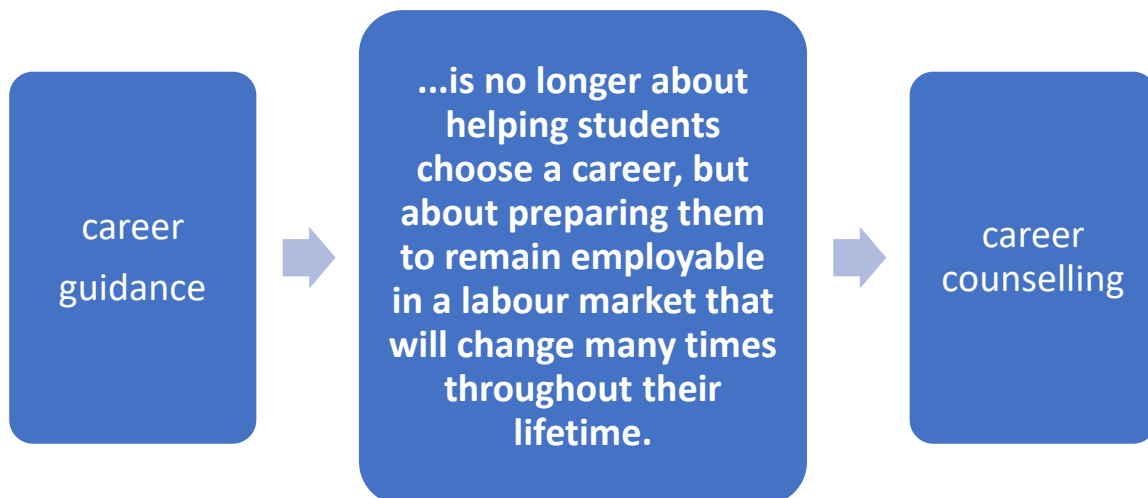
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1. Career Guidance at the Intersection of Education and the Future of Work

In June 2025, career counsellors from Cyprus, Romania, Greece, Spain and Italy gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus for the Erasmus+ Training programme **Career Guidance 4.0** (Project ID: 2023-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000153980). The initiative focuses on equipping career practitioners with the skills, tools and mindset needed to support individuals in navigating careers during the ongoing digital transformation. The world of work is changing faster than at any point in modern history. Automation, artificial intelligence, remote work and digitization are redefining professional roles. Some professions disappear, others are born, and most undergo constant reinvention.

In this context, the mission of school counsellors has become more complex. We are not simply guiding students toward a **first job**! We are preparing them for a lifetime of learning, transitions and reinvention.

The training in Cyprus emphasized a crucial truth:





2. The Competence Framework: A Foundation for Career Adaptability

One of the core components of the programme was the **Career Competence Framework**, a model that provides clarity on the competencies students need to thrive in a future labour market, including:

- critical thinking and problem solving
- digital literacy and data awareness
- adaptability and resilience
- collaboration and intercultural communication
- self-awareness and self-management

Unlike traditional counselling models focused on job selection, the competence framework answers a different question:

Who do students need to become in order to navigate the jobs of the future confidently?

As school counsellors, we do not place students into jobs, nor do we mediate employment. However, we hold a unique responsibility.

We strengthen the competencies that allow young people to create opportunities in their future labour market.

By integrating the competence framework in counselling sessions, workshops and guidance programmes, counsellors enable students to:

- Identify their strengths, interests and values.
- Develop agency and autonomy in decision-making.
- Connect learning experiences with real-world applications.
- Build confidence to face transitions and unexpected challenges.

3. The New Reality of Career Counselling: From Choosing to Navigating

During the training, we explored essential topics for the modern guidance professional:

- **labour market intelligence and data literacy** – how to interpret labour market trends,
- **digital career guidance tools** – including platforms, assessments and AI-supported guidance systems,
- **inclusive and equitable career support**, especially for vulnerable or underrepresented groups,
- **ethical practice in a digital counselling environment**, including data privacy and boundaries.

The emphasis was clear!

Career guidance is becoming strategic, data-informed and competence-driven.

Traditional guidance asks students: “What career do you want to choose?”

Career guidance in the digital era asks: “**Which competencies will help you thrive in multiple careers throughout your life?**”

4. School Counsellors and the Labour Market: A Necessary Connection

A recurring conversation during the training focused on a dilemma shared by many counsellors: “We don’t work directly with the labour market. How do we still prepare students for it?” **The answer is grounded in the competence framework.**

Even if school counsellors are not employment agents and do not liaise with employers directly, **we serve as the bridge** between:

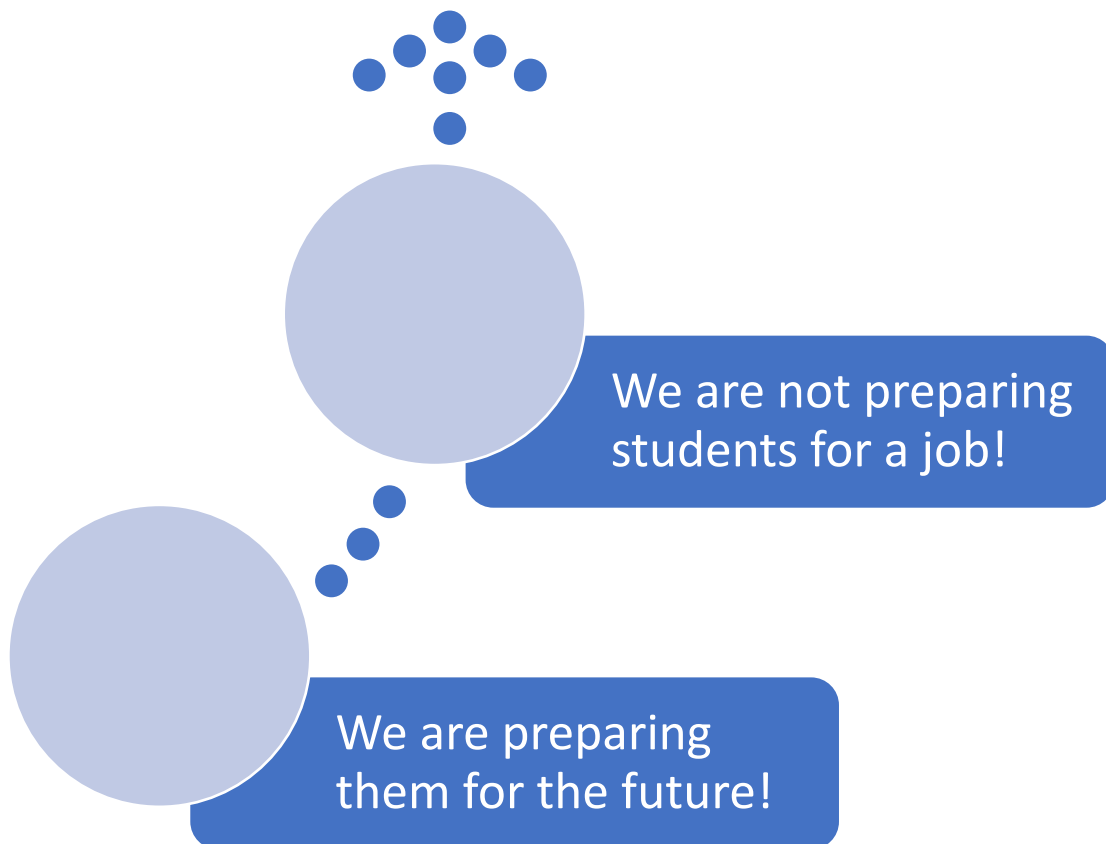
- personal development,
- educational paths,
- and future employability.

We are the link between **who the student is today** and **who they can become tomorrow**.

Our work ensures that students...

...can understand themselves,
...can articulate their strengths,
...can build the confidence to pursue opportunities,
...and can adapt when the labour market changes.

In other words...



5. Learning Through Cultural Immersion: Cyprus as an Open Classroom

Beyond the professional training, the Erasmus experience offered a rich **intercultural learning dimension**.

Through guided visits, local interactions and cultural activities, we discovered:

- the Cypriot concept of *philoxenia* — the characteristic hospitality extended to strangers,
- the multicultural history influenced by Greek, Turkish and Middle Eastern culture,
- traditions connected to food, music and community celebrations,
- the unique rhythm of life shaped by proximity to the sea.

Cultural immersion significantly enhances career guidance practice because it nurtures:

- openness,
- curiosity,
- tolerance for ambiguity,
- cross-cultural communication skills.

These are not just travel benefits, they are core professional competencies.

As counsellors, we guide students toward the understanding that **global mobility, intercultural fluency and multilingual communication are employability skills** in themselves.

6. Lifelong Career Development: Guidance as a Continuous Practice

A powerful message of the training was that **career development never stops**.

The model discussed:

- Career learning happens **throughout life**,
- Across **multiple contexts** (school, family, community, hobbies),
- And at **different levels of depth** (knowledge, practice, meaning).

Thus, counselling must shift from a single event (e.g., “career decision in grade 8”) to a **continuous process of identity formation and exploration**.

During collaborative workshops, we shared tools and activity models that can be used in schools:

- portfolio of strengths and achievements,
- reflective journals on learning experiences,
- peer-to-peer guidance circles,
- mapping personal values to professional paths.

These approaches encourage students to see themselves not as passive recipients of jobs, but as **active architects of their life and career journey**.

7. Professional Networking and European Collaboration

One of the most valuable aspects of the programme was European collaboration. Through dialogue and exchanges with counsellors from other countries, we:

- compared guidance procedures,
- analyzed different policy models,
- discussed student needs and labour market realities,
- shared tools and platforms used in each country.

This exchange emphasized that although educational systems differ, **our challenges are the same**, and so is our mission: **to support the personal and professional empowerment of learners**.

The training strengthened our sense of belonging to a wider professional community — one that proactively shapes the future of guidance.

8. Final Reflections

The Erasmus training in Cyprus leaves behind more than knowledge, it leaves perspective. I return to Romania with:

- deeper understanding of competence-based guidance,
- strategies for integrating digital career tools into school counselling practice,
- strong European partnerships,
- and a renewed belief that career education is a driver of social equity.

Career counsellors do not predict the future. We prepare students to shape it.

With gratitude to our partner organizations — **Euroguidance Cyprus, European University Cyprus**, and my sending organization **CMBRAE – Bucharest Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Center** — for creating a meaningful and transformative learning experience.



Resources

- Erasmus+ Project Careers 4.0 / 2023-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000153980
- International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP)
- European Commission (2024), *Skills for the Future Labour Market*
- OECD Career Guidance Policy Review (2021–2023)