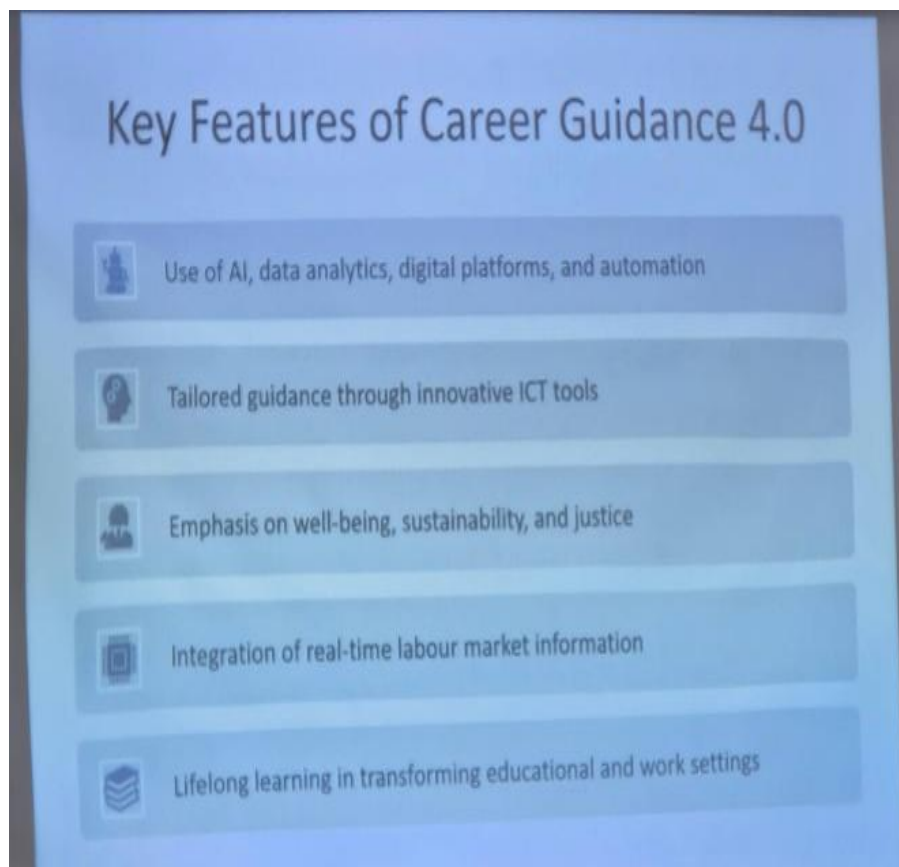


Innovative career guidance for the future A transformative learning journey in Cyprus

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Participating in the “Lifelong career development and career management in a digital age” training in Cyprus was a truly transformative experience for me, both professionally and personally. The event gathered professionals in the fields of career counselling, vocational education, and school counsellors from different countries, all eager to understand and implement innovative approaches for career guidance, in line with the fast-evolving realities of today’s labor market. Over several days, we delved into new theories, exchanged ideas, and reflected on our own roles as counsellors in supporting students for a future shaped by digitalization, automation, and continuous change.

The training made me realize not only the pace at which the world of work is changing, but also the urgency with which we, as professionals, must adapt our methods and mindsets. We need to develop new competencies and approaches that blend science with emotion, technology with humanity, and knowledge with empathy. In what follows, I will share the main insights and reflections from this experience, aiming to paint a coherent picture of what Career Guidance 4.0 means in practice and why it is more relevant than ever.



Career Guidance 4.0

A new paradigm for counseling

The concept of Career Guidance 4.0 represents a fundamental rethinking of traditional counselling.

No longer is our role limited to offering information about jobs and studies; instead, we are called to be facilitators of lifelong learning and career self-management.

The digital era demands that we integrate technology at every step: from using artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital platforms, to tailoring our guidance through innovative ICT tools. But just as important is the attention we give to well-being, sustainability, and justice, ensuring that our interventions are not only modern, but also ethical and inclusive.

Key features of this new paradigm include the use of real-time labor market data to inform guidance, as well as a strong emphasis on helping students navigate transitions rather than just make singular decisions. The labor market is evolving so rapidly that skills which were valuable yesterday may become obsolete tomorrow. According to what we discussed in Cyprus, every four to five years, a skill can lose up to half of its value on the market. This means that continuous upskilling and reskilling are essential, not just for students, but for us as professionals too.

The changing workforce. Generational shifts and new expectations

Another focal point of the training was the profound generational shift taking place in the workforce. By 2030, Millennials (Gen Y) and Generation Z are expected to make up around 75% of the workforce. These generations bring new values and expectations: they are more collaborative, value-driven, digitally native, pragmatic, entrepreneurial, and socially aware. They thrive in environments that embrace change and require adaptability.

Employers are now seeking a broader set of skills, going beyond technical know-how to include soft skills such as adaptability, willingness to learn, and career self-management. Career paths are increasingly nonlinear, requiring individuals to embrace multiple transitions, reflect regularly, and constantly develop new competencies. Flexible work is becoming the norm, with freelancing, remote work, and platform-based jobs opening up new opportunities and challenges. At the same time, diversity, equity, inclusion, and social responsibility are gaining prominence as companies and individuals navigate crises and uncertainty on a global scale.

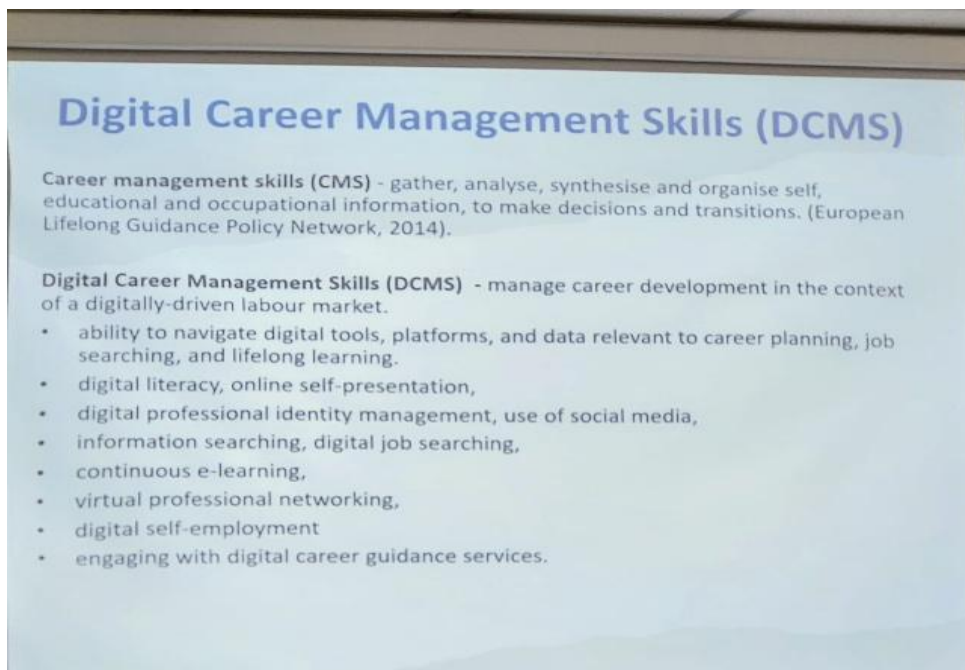
From decision-making to navigating continuous transitions

One of the most important shifts discussed in Cyprus was the transition from managing decisions and choices to managing continuous transitions. In the past, career counseling often revolved around helping students choose a career path or educational program. Now, our role is to guide them in developing the skills and mindset necessary to adapt to ongoing change. This shift requires us to focus on career self-management and to foster a culture of lifelong learning.

Self-directed learning, community-based guidance, and collaborative exploration are at the heart of this new approach. Students must be equipped to manage their own career journeys, make informed decisions at every stage, and view transitions as opportunities for growth, not just challenges to overcome. As counselors, we need to become facilitators of reflection, encouraging students to explore, experiment, and develop strong professional identities.

Digital Career Management Skills. Essential literacy for the future

A central theme of the training was the crucial role of Digital Career Management Skills (DCMS). In the context of a digitally driven labor market, students must develop the ability to navigate an ever-expanding array of digital tools and platforms for career planning, job searching, and lifelong learning.



Digital literacy is no longer optional; it is a core competence, encompassing online self-presentation, professional identity management, information searching, virtual networking, and even digital self-employment.

Furthermore, students need to engage actively with digital career guidance services, participate in continuous e-learning, and build their professional presence online. As counsellors, it is our responsibility to support them in acquiring these skills, while also updating our own digital competencies to remain relevant and effective in our roles.

Rethinking Lifelong Learning: Microlearning and Micro-credentials

The traditional model of linear, qualification-based education is giving way to more flexible, modular, and personalized learning journeys. Lifelong learning now emphasizes adaptability, self-direction, and a proactive approach to integrating both technical and soft skills. Microlearning, a strategy that focuses on acquiring new knowledge in small, targeted

units has become increasingly popular, thanks to the accessibility offered by mobile apps, online platforms, and social media.

Micro-credentials, which record specific learning outcomes acquired through short learning experiences, are gaining traction as a way to recognize and showcase skills that match the rapidly changing needs of the labor market. These credentials are portable, can be combined into larger qualifications, and are owned by the learner, providing greater flexibility and autonomy in one's educational and professional development.

Modern theories and approaches. Science meets Emotion

The Cyprus training introduced us to two modern and complementary approaches to career counseling: the Co-Constructing Approach and the Career Readiness Approach.

The Co-Constructing Approach (Bimrose et al., 2019) shifts the focus from simply delivering information to facilitating the dialogical co-creation of meaning and identity. Through online learning, narrative guidance, and the use of digital tools such as reflective forums and VR interviews, counselors help students reflect, share stories, and develop strong self-understanding and adaptability. Our role becomes that of a partner in exploration, offering emotional support and promoting the alignment of personal values with career choices.

Meanwhile, the Career Readiness Approach (Mann, Denis & Percy, 2020) highlights the urgency of early career guidance and the importance of lifelong career management skills. It focuses on indicators such as career readiness, certainty, ambition, alignment, and even originality. The approach recognizes that many young people hold narrow or unrealistic career expectations, often mismatched with labor market realities.

By fostering internal and external motivation, and by encouraging students to articulate and align their aspirations, we can help them navigate a complex and uncertain future with greater confidence.

Mutual learning and professional growth: The human side of innovation

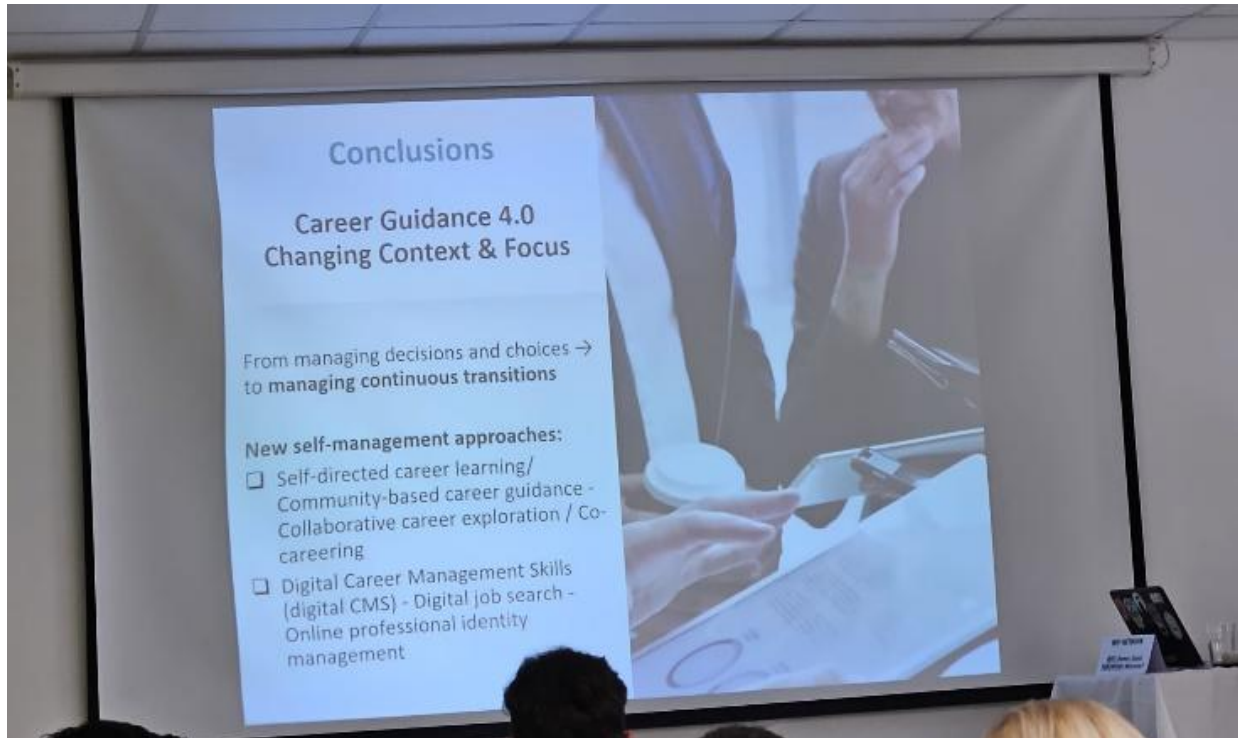
Beyond the theoretical and technical knowledge gained, the training in Cyprus was a unique opportunity for mutual learning.

Engaging in workshops and open discussions with professionals from different backgrounds, I realized how much value there is in exchanging experiences and perspectives. Together, we reflected on our own practices, discovered new resources, and challenged our assumptions.

This collaborative spirit is essential for counselors working in a digital world. We must not only teach students to learn throughout life but also model this attitude ourselves.

By embracing change, experimenting with new methods, and supporting each other, we can create a culture of continuous improvement and resilience, qualities that are more important than ever in a world marked by uncertainty and rapid transformation.

Empowering students for a digital future



The experience in Cyprus convinced me that the future of career guidance lies at the intersection of science and emotion, technology and humanity.

As school counselors, our mission is to empower students to navigate an unpredictable world with curiosity, adaptability, and courage. This means integrating digital tools, promoting lifelong learning, and fostering strong professional identities, while also supporting students emotionally and ethically.

To remain effective, we must continuously upskill ourselves, collaborate with colleagues, and remain open to innovation. Only then can we truly prepare the next generation for the challenges and opportunities of Industry 4.0 and ensure that they are not just ready for jobs, but for meaningful, fulfilling careers.