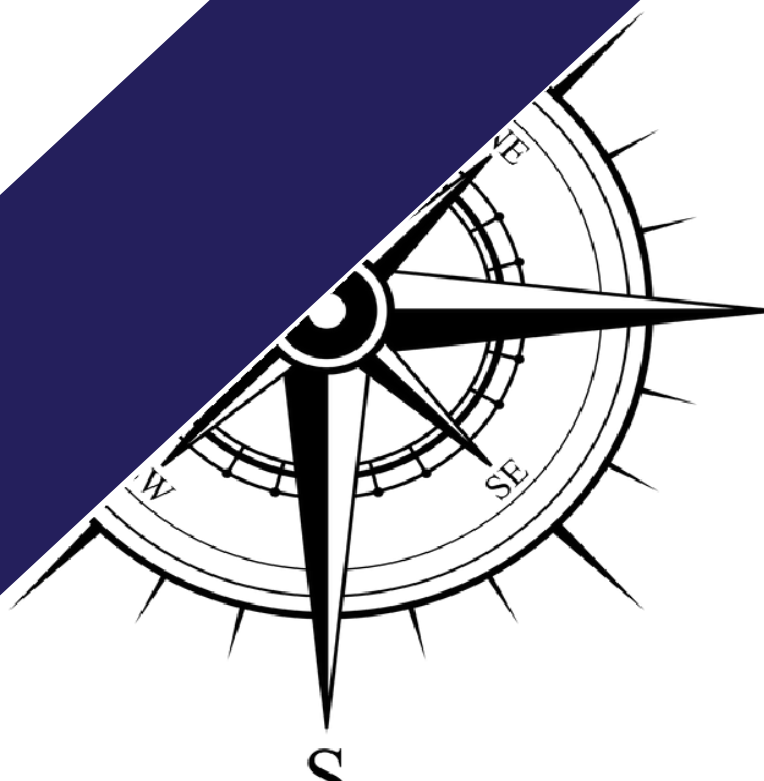




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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1 -IT-KA 220-SCH-000156174

Methodological Toolkit

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREQUEL OF "MY COMPASS" PROJECT: "CALLING" PROJECT"

PROPOSED MODEL – ERASMUS+ PROJECT "CALLING - An Innovative Approach in School Guidance and Vocational Orientation" – *Anastasia Murzenkova (EULAB)*

TARGET

The proposed model of Calling Project aimed at supporting young people aged 15 – 18 (mainly) with their educational and employability decision making

EXPLORATION

The model aimed at allowing young people to take 3 online questionnaires that help them to explore themselves and identify key traits, competences and interests that will inform

their decision making when thinking about their future pathways for education and work. An online platform was developed (the same adopted for My Compass project).

ACTIONS AND TOOLS: 3 Online Assessment questionnaires:

1. Values In Action Survey (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

2. Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, 2003)

3. RIASEC Test (Holland, 1997).

The project has the general aim to help the students aged 15 to 18 to assess their competences and skills, even those not formally acquired, i.e. the "soft" skills considered so important for a full intellectual and emotional development of young people.

This objective is reached using a career guidance path delivered through a digital platform. Starting from a Comparative Analysis of Best Practices on career guidance (not financed but still carried out), the project has been developed through 3 PROJECT RESULTS:

1. Calling Digital Guidance Platform

2. Suite of tools (training modules for teachers)

3. Calling Charter that includes Guidelines for schools working with the Calling platform and Calling method

CALLING PROJECT

What is the Calling Project?

"CALLING" project has been developed to inspire and help you realise and develop your talents, aspirations and career goals. This is done through a process called "Orientation". Orientation is a process that helps you improve your self-perception (the idea that you have about the kind of person you are) and as a result will help you to develop and make choices and decisions for the future, that are relevant to your interests and aspirations.

This "**Desk aid**" is a helpful and useful guide that will provide you with a basic overview of the project, along with the tasks that need to be completed. Your teacher will also be able to assist you throughout your journey and help you with any difficulties or problems you may have.



READ MORE

DISCOVER
YOUR INTERESTS

DISCOVER
YOUR VALUES

DISCOVER
YOUR STRENGTHS

VIEW
YOUR PROFILE

The Guidance Method used in CALLING project is based on a set of interconnected dimensions (**Self, Relational, World**) to be explored by students in order to know more about themselves and their future career path. Each dimension is explored through an Online Assessment Questionnaire, taken on the CALLING platform: <https://calling.lmsformazione.it/>.

The method allows students to know more about their **Strengths** (Self dimension), their **Values** (Relational dimension) and their **Occupational Interests** (World dimension); for further information on the three questionnaires please see chapter 2.2 in this document.

THE CALLING GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

- ✓ **Engage** teachers and careers officers using training (**Methodological Toolkit**)

- ✓ If you are trying to introduce the use of CALLING Platform in your school, **set a group of teachers** who will interact and discuss with each other.
- ✓ **Evaluate** the guidance activity on CALLING platform to assess its impacts
on younger people and their decision-making processes.
- **Set a system of credits** for teachers and students who use CALLING as a
guidance activity.
- The tests on Calling Platform would work particularly well if **joined with a work experience** for students (**internship**).
- Use CALLING platform to run an **extra-curricular activity** for students, if it's
impossible to introduce it into the National School Curriculum.
- CALLING Platform can be useful in **Vocational Training Centres** and in **Career Guidance** for young NEETs.

CALLING “Good practice”

Labels:  Good practice

is the label awarded by Erasmus + National Agency to the projects that have been particularly well managed and can inspire others!

1.2 OVERVIEW OF MY COMPASS PROJECT

Anastasia Murzenkova (Eulab)

My Compass project will complement Calling project by producing a set of tools to support teacher in the strategic activities that follow the questionnaires answering. This will be done by implementing:

- A Methodological toolkit for teachers on: analysis of students' results in professional interests, values and strengths; providing proper feedback interviews; addressing students' vulnerability conditions in career planning.
- Experimentation of the Toolkit in 4 high schools and evaluation of the effectiveness of the experimentation with feedback of the results.
- International training experience to consolidate learning.

PRIORITIES

SCHOOL EDUCATION: Supporting teachers, school leaders and other teaching professions

HORIZONTAL: Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To support the evolution of the role of teachers, in line with the new demand for teaching expressed at an international level by students and the world of work; a new role that must also include career guidance: the ability to lead students in the exploration of their aspirations and to support their decisions to pursue them.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

- 1) Enable teachers to conduct, in full autonomy and in compliance with scientifically based methodologies, an entire guidance process with their students.
- 2) Enable teachers to apply inclusive guidance practices towards students in vulnerable conditions, in order to prevent the transmission of existing inequalities in the professional sphere.

TARGET GROUP:

TEACHERS: the main target group of the project are **school teachers**. About 10 per country will be involved, for a total of 40 teachers.

STUDENTS: aged between 16 and 19, are the real beneficiaries of the guidance activities. They will be involved in the activities planned in WP3, the experimentation of an entire career guidance process.

In each phase special attention will be paid to **students in vulnerable conditions** (e.g. socio-economic disadvantage, migration experience, disability etc.).

MY COMPASS – PARTNERSHIP

- Eulab Consulting Srl (Rome, Italy) – training company

- Istituto Omnicomprensivo Orte (Orte, VT, Italy) - coordinator school



- 53rd Lyceum of Athens (Athens, Greece) - partner school
- Liceul Teoretic "Ovidius" (Constanta, Romania) - partner school
- Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago (Poceirão, Palmela, Portugal) - partner school

2. THEORETICAL MODELS OF CAREER GUIDANCE ADOPTED IN MY COMPASS

2.1 A CONTEMPORARY CAREER GUIDANCE PARADIGM: LIFE DESIGN

Emiliano Fedeli (Eulab)

Life Design Model is defined as a «[...] a contextualized model based on the epistemology of social constructionism, particularly recognizing that (a) an individual's knowledge and identity are the product of social and cognitive processes taking place in context of interactions between people and groups as well as negotiation between them (Gasper, 1999), and (b) the meaning an individual gives to reality is co-constructed in a social, historical and cultural context through the discourse with which we form our relationships (Young & Collin, 2004).” (Savickas et al., 2009, pg. 244).

Authors developed the Life Design model (see the paper in attachment for a full description) in the context of globalization of economies and of rapid advances in information technology, with the aim of creating a new approach to meet the needs of 21st century clients who live in knowledge societies. Authors referred to traditional career theories and vocational guidance techniques as unfitting for postmodern economy, for different reason: “First, they are rooted in assumptions of stability of personal characteristics and secure jobs in bounded organizations. Second, they conceptualize careers as a fixed sequence of stages. Concepts such as vocational identity, career planning, career development, and career stages each are used to predict people's adjustment to work environments assuming a relatively high stability of the environments and peoples' behavior. However, even within the positivist paradigm, individual factors such as people's vocational interests seem to be less fixed than has been assumed [...]”(Savickas et al., 2009, pg. 240).

Therefore, authors of the Life Design model propose five presuppositions about people and their work lives:

1. **From traits and states to context.** Professional identities should be seen as changing patterns influenced by the socio-cultural context and by subjective stories, thus difficult to represent by static, abstract and simplified profiles

emerging from tests. Personality traits assumes then a little influence on professional identity.

2. **From prescription to process:** Providing information and prescriptions on training courses and professional careers is becoming increasingly difficult, due to the high rate of change in the job requirements, the constant advent of new jobs and considering that career paths are become less and less linear, including changes of profession/sector. Career guidance counsellors have to show clients "how to do", not "what to do", using a meta-perspective that include the capacity to produce systemic analysis of complex, interactive and dynamic processes and their multiple consequences on peoples' lives.
3. **From linear causality to non-linear dynamics.** While it can be said that some factors such as general intelligence and basic values remain relatively stable in time, it is essential that people, when planning their lives, avoid considering aptitudes and interests as fixed characteristics. The assumption that aptitudes and interests are sufficient to succeed in a given job or training, and the belief that such requirements remain stable and predictable, seem to be no longer true. Multiple, changing, and complex decisional chains become the rule, while simple linear causalities are the exception.
4. **From scientific facts to narrative realities.** With traditional societal norms and life-stages loosing progressively their "identity coefficient", we are witnessing the growing co-existence of multiple identities and of subjective realities in each person. Traditional scientific tests on vocational guidance were built on societal norms no longer reliable, so those tests are losing their predictive capacity. To stay closer to people's needs, career counsellors need to pay a great attention to their subjective narration of themselves.
5. **From describing to modeling.** The high level of customization and non-standardization requested by Life Design interventions complicates the process and methods of evaluating their effectiveness. It is necessary to refer to approaches in which complex patterns of interacting variables can be taken into account in order to predict probable behaviors within complex systems.

In the face of a global context characterized by rapid social and technological changes, that presents increasingly insecure, precarious, transitory and multiform

forms of employment Life Design interventions should be aimed at promoting, as a priority, Adaptability – related to a change – and Narratability – related to continuity.

- **ADAPTABILITY:** the Life Design approach aims to help people outline and create their own professional history that is characterized by adaptive and flexible responses to life-stages tasks, professional difficulties and work transitions. It also aims to help people enhance their ability to predict changes and their future in changing contexts, to find ways to meet their expectations through involvement in different activities. Consequently, it aims to increase professional adaptability, and therefore to ensure that people are characterized by the five "C" of the Theory on the construction of professional life: Concern for the future, sense of Control, Curiosity, Confidence and Commitment;
- **NARRABILITY:** career guidance interventions should be based on a dialogue through which the counsellor can help the person to build and narrate a story that speaks of his/her future, work and life with coherence and continuity. This would favour the construction of subjective identities and the understanding of basic cognitive structures. The counsellor should help people formulate their identity in their own words and map their system of subjective identities (which are by definition context-specific).

2.2 THE THREE QUESTIONNAIRES SELECTED

Since the target of the project are school teachers – not professional career counsellors – it was decided to adopt, in the career guidance process suggested, three questionnaires, to be used as an informative starting point to elaborate reflections with the students and help them in planning their future. Nonetheless, teachers were advised about the limitations on the use of questionnaires, in particular highlighting that:

- Results emerging from questionnaires are neither 100% objective nor definitive;
- There are no standard rules to match people with tertiary education/vocational education/jobs.

The selected questionnaires are: VIA questionnaire, Portrait Values questionnaire and RIASEC questionnaire.

a. **Character Strengths model and VIA questionnaire**

The Character Strengths model (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) is grounded in the Positive Psychology paradigm (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), that tried to widen the object of study of psychology to positive personal characteristics and outcome, with important epistemological implications. According to the proponents of Positive Psychology, psychology should not only focus on mental disease, both in a preventive and reparative approach, but also in promoting mental health, life satisfaction and sense of fulfilment.

According to the Character Strengths model, Character refers to elements of one's personality that are morally valued. Authors have identified 6 universally recognized virtues (see picture below), present in every historical period and in every culture.

Authors then have identified a total of 24 character strengths, defined as relatively stable, present in each of us to varying degrees. Character strengths can be then considered as personal qualities of individuals that make them worthy of moral praise. Developing character strengths has a twofold impact: it fosters morality in general and helps people to nurture positive qualities that are associated with a healthier and happier life.



Figure 1 - Virtues and Character Strengths - Character Strengths model

The Values In Action (VIA) Survey was published by Peterson & Seligman (2004) to assess Character Strengths. The VIA Youth Survey is made of 96 questions and returns an individual profile with the character strengths more relevant for the respondent.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER GUIDANCE:

- Character strengths are not directly related to career and job dimensions; they shed light on what is important for the person, what s/he is most sensitive to and what makes her/him feel good;

- Character strengths are a useful first input for students to stimulate reflection upon themselves and in particular on elements that they value generally in their life, not only in the educational or professional spheres.

a. **Theory of Basic Human Values and Portrait Values questionnaire**

The Theory of Basic Human Values was implemented by Schwartz (1992). It is a cross-cultural psychological model; accordingly, values are considered universal. Values are defined as personal beliefs representing criteria to select and justify actions and to evaluate people (including the self) and events.

Schwartz identified 10 universally recognized human values:

1. Power: refers to the interest in achieving social power, authority, wealth;
2. Success: Refers to the pursuit of personal fulfillment by bringing into play skills that are socially accepted;
3. Hedonism: importance is given to pleasure and personal gratification, to be able to enjoy life;
4. Stimulation: novelty and challenges are important;
5. Self-direction: refers to independence of thought, having freedom of action to explore things, being able to be creative;
6. Security: they concern social and personal security, harmony and stability;
7. Universalism: tolerance and social justice, environmental protection are important;
8. Benevolence: It is important to preserve and intensify people's well-being, honesty and the absence of resentment;
9. Tradition: they are concerned with respect and compromise with traditional customs and culture, as well as religious ones;
10. Conformism: social norms are valued and behaviours that can hurt or disturb others are avoided, respect for the elderly;

The theory explains how these ten values are interconnected and influence each other, since the pursuit of any of the values results in either an accordance with one another (conformity

and security) or a conflict with at least one other value (benevolence and power). The picture below shows the relations between values.

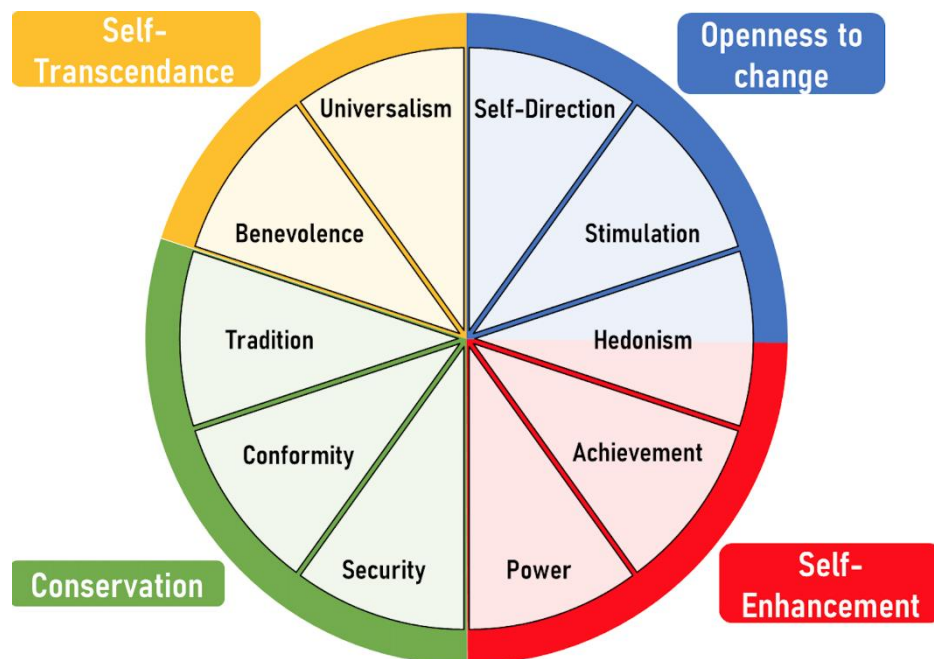


Figure 2 - Basic Human Values

The Portrait Values Questionnaire was published by Schwartz in 2003. The Portrait Values Questionnaire is made of **21 questions** and returns an individual profile with the values more relevant for the respondent.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE:

- Values pertain to desirable end states or behaviors, thus more directly linked to one's ordinary and prospective decisions;
- Values inform on career and job dimensions like preferred occupational sectors, type of employment (e.g. employed, self-employed or entrepreneur) and type of organization (e.g. private, public, NGOs, International Organizations, etc.).

b. **RIASEC model and questionnaire**

The RIASEC Theory was implemented by Holland (1959). It addresses how to match people with jobs, assuming an existing relation between certain personality traits and specific job characteristics/demands. According to the theory, one's personality traits express coherent occupational interests that can be best satisfied in selected homogeneous jobs. Therefore, both occupational interests and jobs can be classified in fixed categories.

The RIASEC Model identifies 6 different types of occupational interests:

1. Realistic (Doers) - People generally preferring activities that involve the use of objects, tools and machinery. They have technical-mechanical and agricultural skills and they consider themselves as frank, decisive, practical. (e.g. mechanic, carpenter, truck driver, electrician, etc.);
2. Investigative (Thinkers) - People who like to observe, learn, investigate, analyse, evaluate, or solve problems. They are interested in observing reality also using scientific analysis and verification procedures. They are used to reflect on problems and generally are considered as analytical, critical, methodical, rational and confidential (e.g. biologist, astronomer, chemist);
3. Artistic (Creators) - People who have artistic, innovating, or intuitional abilities and like to work in unstructured situations using their imagination and creativity. They are generally considered complex, emotional, idealistic, impulsive, original, etc. (e.g. actor, musician, dancer);
4. Social (Helpers) - People who like to work with people to help, inform, educate or heal them. They are often considered generous, kind, sociable and sympathetic (e.g. social worker, teacher, psychologist);
5. Enterprising (Persuaders) - People who like to work with people, influencing, persuading, leading or managing them for organizational goals or economic gain. They are mostly considered ambitious, exhibitionist, self-confident and talkative (entrepreneur, lawyer, sales representative, real estate agent);
6. Conventional (Organizers) - People who like to work with data, have clerical or numerical ability, carry out tasks in detail, or follow through on others' instructions. They are

generally considered conscientious and tidy, dutiful and efficient (e.g. clerks, financial advisor, accountant).



Figure 3 - Occupational Interests according to RIASEC model

The RIASEC Test was published by Holland in 1997. The RIASEC Test is made of 42 questions and returns an individual profile with the 3 interests more relevant for the respondent.

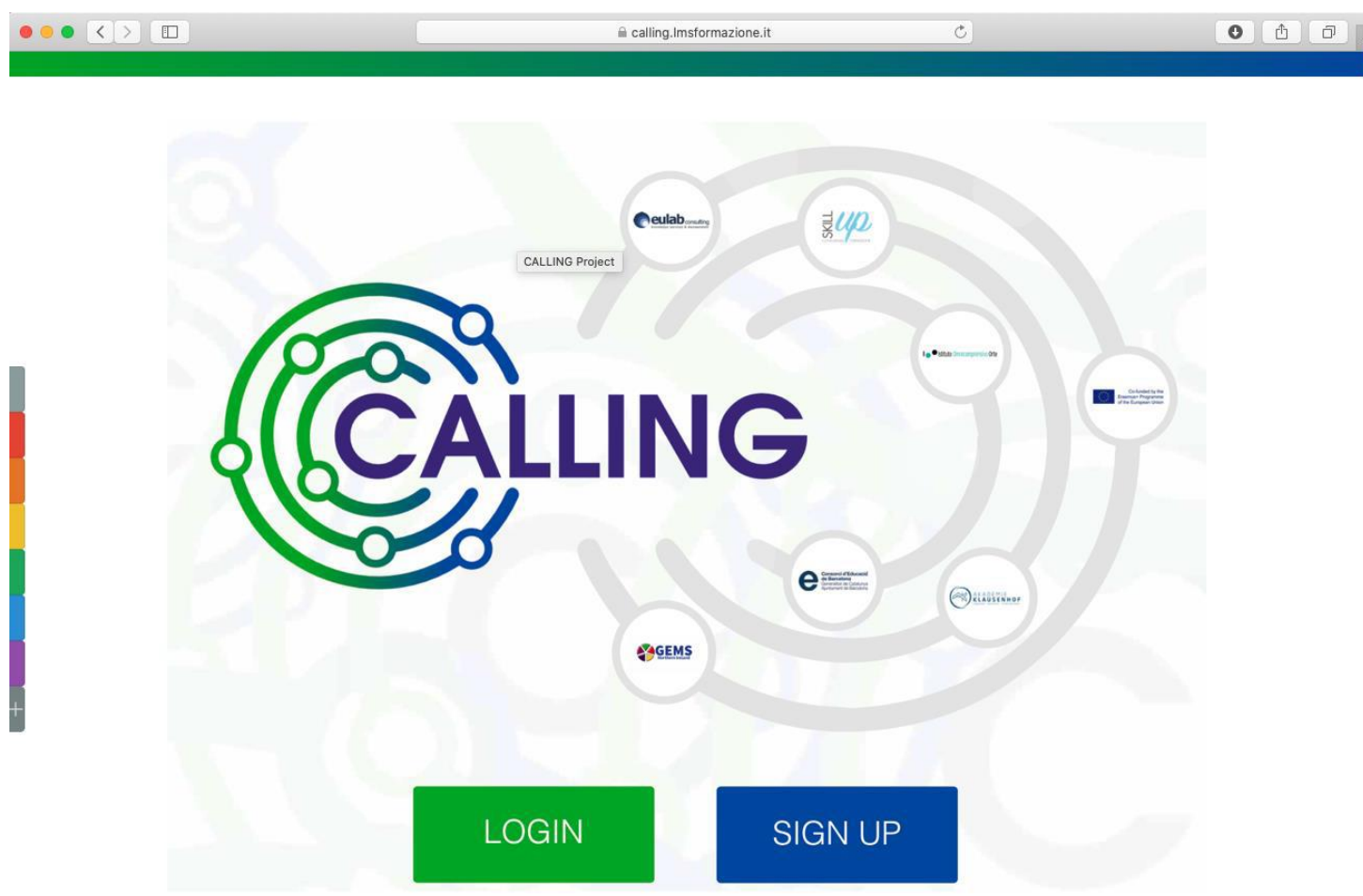
IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE:

- Results offer concrete information on the occupational interests and related jobs of the respondent;
- It is very important to not look at results as a crystallized and definitive picture of the respondent. The emerging profile has to be discussed with the student and contextualised with respect to his/her education career and to his/her cultural background, thus being open to adjust or modify the emerging profile.

3. PRACTICING CAREER GUIDANCE WITH STUDENTS

3.1 HOW TO ANSWER QUESTIONNAIRES ON THE CALLING PLATFORM

FIRST CONNECT TO CALLING PLATFORM <https://calling.lmsformazione.it/>



- Users can proceed autonomously with registration (for MY COMPASS project a guided registration procedure was implemented, see below), providing name, surname, a username and the e-mail address. Once completed the registration, users receive an e-mail containing a link to be accessed to confirm the registration;
- To login, users enter their username and password to access the platform. It is asked to enter a CODE to complete the login (for security reason), but at the moment it is no longer requested, so user can just click on the NEXT button and the login is completed.

For MY COMPASS project, a different registration procedure was implemented, in order to keep track separately of the teachers and students enrollment of each school. The procedure is structured as follows:

- Eulab Consulting prepared CSV files to be filled in by each school with name/surname/e-mail address of teachers and students involved

- d) Each Consulting school partner filled in its CSV files and shared them with Eulab Consulting PM;
- e) Eulab Consulting proceeded with the enrollment of all students and teachers (separated per school) and sent to all users enrolled an e-mail to complete the registration;
- f) Each teacher and student complete the registration by entering username and password received by e-mail.

3.2 HOW TO LOOK AT STUDENTS' RESULTS AND TO ANALYSE THEM

AN INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS ANALYSIS: RECOMMENDED APPROACH AND MAIN RISKS -

Miriam Celano (EULAB)

In the process of interpreting and returning the results of the guidance tests to the students, it is crucial to fully understand the limitations and challenges that may arise. First of all, it should be emphasised that although guidance tests provide a useful overview of the inclinations and preferences of students, they have inherent limitations. The answers provided by students do not represent an absolute truth, but rather a subjective perspective influenced by multiple factors, such as social context, personal experiences, and expectations (their own and others'). Consequently, test results should be regarded as a supporting tool, not a definitive assessment.

Another important aspect to consider is the need to supplement test results with the direct knowledge teachers have of their students. Thanks to their experience and daily observation, teachers possess a unique understanding of pupils' abilities, preferences, and needs. It is therefore crucial that test results are interpreted in the light of this contextual information to obtain a more complete and accurate view of individual student characteristics.

However, it is important to recognise that the reading of guidance test results can be influenced by heuristics, cognitive biases, and prejudices. Teachers themselves may be influenced by these factors. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a critical and informed view, while also trying to identify and mitigate possible biases in the interpretation of results. It is specified that these types of mental processes are functional and useful for the human mind to 'put order' in the world and make decisions in the face of complex problems quickly and with minimal cognitive effort. Stereotypes, prejudices, and other cognitive processes are intrinsic to human nature, often operating at an unconscious level. These processes are the result of mental mechanisms that simplify the complexity of the world around us, enabling us to process information quickly and make decisions efficiently. However, it is crucial to emphasise that awareness of these cognitive processes is essential to mitigate their negative effects on our perceptions and decisions. Only through a thorough understanding of these mechanisms and their implications can we adopt conscious strategies to counteract them. This involves a constant critical examination of our perceptions and judgements, as well as an active engagement in promoting open-mindedness and inclusiveness in our daily interactions. Some psychological phenomena that may influence test results and their interpretation will be discussed in more detail below. Some mainly concern teachers (such as stereotypes, prejudices, heuristics, and confirmation bias) and may influence their perception; some others concern students and may intervene at the time of compilation (such as the phenomenon of social desirability and acquiescence); others may influence perception of

both teachers and students (such as gender bias).

Focus n°1

Stereotypes and prejudices: Stereotypes are generalisations or beliefs about a group of people based on real or perceived characteristics of that group. These simplified generalisations can be positive or negative and can influence our perceptions and judgements about individuals belonging to that group. For example, a common stereotype is that older people are all slow or conservative in their opinions. Prejudices are negative or positive attitudes or feelings that influence our behaviour towards a group of people. These feelings may be based on stereotypes, personal experiences or simply fear of the unknown. According to research conducted by Fiske and colleagues (1998), stereotypes and prejudices are complex constructs that play a significant role in social dynamics and individual perceptions. These phenomena can be divided into two main components: automatic and controlled. Automatic components concern the instinctive and immediate cognitive and emotional responses that occur when people interact with individuals belonging to different social groups. Controlled components, on the other hand, refer to the evaluations and beliefs that emerge through more reflective and deliberate processes. It is essential to understand that despite efforts to suppress conscious biases, stereotypes, and automatic prejudices can persist and influence behaviour, even among well-meaning individuals.

Effectively addressing stereotypes and prejudices requires a thorough understanding of their origins and nature to promote greater understanding and tolerance between different social groups.

Heuristics and cognitive biases: Heuristics and cognitive biases represent automatic thought patterns that influence our everyday decisions and evaluations. According to a study by Tversky and Kahneman (1974), heuristics are cognitive shortcuts that allow us to make quick and efficient decisions even based on limited information. However, these mental shortcuts can lead to incorrect judgements and irrational decisions, especially when the available information is ambiguous or incomplete. Cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, can distort our perception of reality and lead us to ignore or selectively interpret evidence that contradicts our pre-existing beliefs. It is crucial to be aware of these mental processes and adopt more reflective and analytical approaches in our evaluations and decisions to mitigate the impact of biases and heuristics on our thinking and behaviour.

Confirmation bias is a cognitive bias that leads individuals to consider information only if it is consistent with a pre-existing idea. This bias leads people to pay more attention and attribute more credibility to information that confirms their beliefs or hypotheses and to ignore or downplay information that contradicts them. For example, a teacher who has prior knowledge of the student with whom he or she is having a guidance interview might be convinced that he or she is suitable or unsuitable for a certain university path or career, despite evidence suggesting otherwise (Sesil, 2014). This can lead to ignoring important information that disconfirms the initial idea of the teacher/orientator, thus reinforcing any biases (Knappitsch & Caliskan, 2018). When discussing career options, this bias may lead people to seek evidence that confirms their initial opinions, reinforcing the belief that

decisions are rational.

For example, suppose a teacher receives the results of a RIASEC guidance test indicating that a student is oriented towards the 'Realistic' type, with a preference for practical, concrete professions. However, the teacher knows the student personally and has noticed that he/she is very creative and passionate about solving problems in innovative ways. The teacher may be tempted to doubt the results of the test or ignore them completely because they seem to be at odds with his perception of the student. In this case, the teacher may fall into the 'trap' of confirmation bias, unconsciously seeking confirmation of his prior expectations of the student instead of taking into account the new information provided by the test. He/she may also be influenced by stereotypes or prejudices associated with the personality type indicated by the 'Realistic' test, neglecting the individual nuances of the student.

Guidance Recommendations: *before constructing an idea of the student's profile, suspend judgement and ask yourself 'What is the idea I have developed of this student so far and why? How rigid is the idea I have? Is it possible that there are other aspects of the student that I have not noticed or got to know, and that my idea is based on a stereotype/prejudice?'*

Rather than uncritically rejecting or accepting the test results, the teacher is advised to critically examine his or her own perceptions and assess how the test results may fit in with the personal knowledge he or she has of the student.

Focus n°2

Social desirability: The consideration of self-presentation strategies is important in career guidance and counselling (Fletcher, 1981; 1990; Garr-Schultz & Gardner, 2018; Marcus, 2009; Paulhus, 1998). Originally, the study of such strategies emerged with a focus on 'social desirability', i.e. how desirable an individual is according to social norms, especially when it comes to completing self-assessment questionnaires (Paulhus, 1991). People with high social desirability tend to answer questionnaires by trying to present themselves in a positive light (Paulhus, 1991). Edwards (1957) sees social desirability as a characteristic that prompts people to answer questionnaires in a socially acceptable manner. In the same context, Crowne and Marlowe (1960) define social desirability as the need for approval that prompts subjects to respond in a culturally appropriate manner.

Concerning the vocational interests that emerge from the RIASEC test, some students may find some vocational interest profiles socially undesirable, although these reflect their actual interests. For example, the Conventional profile (C), might be perceived as a profile suitable for career options that promote a certain homogeneity, where people are encouraged to conform to predefined rules and norms without much room for individuality and authenticity. This may be unattractive to students seeking to express their identity and pursue unique and meaningful personal goals. The Conventional profile (C) may be perceived as being at odds with current social and cultural expectations that tend to value characteristics of originality, individuality, and self-assertion, just as the Realistic profile (R) may be perceived as being at odds with social expectations that tend to value less concrete and more 'intellectual' professions.



Acquiescence: Acquiescence is a psychological phenomenon that occurs when individuals respond affirmatively or positively to questions, regardless of their content. This type of response can be influenced by several factors, including a tendency to agree with others, a desire to avoid conflict, or simply a lack of attention or interest in carefully analysing questions.

Acquiescence can also be considered a type of cognitive bias, as it affects the way people process information and make decisions. Recognising and understanding acquiescence is important for correctly interpreting participants' responses and obtaining accurate data in psychological surveys.

In the case of the completion of guidance tests, but also in the subsequent feedback session, acquiescence phenomena may influence students' answers in different ways. For example, some of them might be inclined to answer affirmatively without carefully analysing the questions, simply to conform to the expectations of the educational institution and the teacher, thus to present themselves as good students. Others may respond positively in the interview phase because they wish to please others or avoid conflict.

Guidance Recommendations: *When returning test results, teachers can adopt various strategies to mitigate the effects of social desirability and acquiescence:*

- *Comparison with other sources of information: Teachers can compare test results with other sources of information, such as classroom observations, previous teacher evaluations, or parental feedback. This can provide a more complete and accurate view of students' abilities and interests.*

- *Deepening the answers: During the return of the results, teachers can deepen the students' answers by asking them to explain the reasoning behind their choices. This can help identify any discrepancies between the answers given in the tests and the students' true inclinations and skills.*

Critical reflection: Teachers can encourage students to reflect critically on test results, helping them examine their answers and assess their accuracy concerning their personal experiences and goals.

Gender bias: Gender bias is particularly based on the gender binarism imposed by patriarchal society over the centuries. According to this binarism, the female gender is traditionally associated with caring, education and interest in humanistic subjects, while the male gender is associated with career, competition, and scientific subjects. This type of bias results in an important and pervasive phenomenon in our society, which is that of gender segregation.

Occupational gender segregation, as discussed by Charles and Grusky (2016), represents one of the most significant challenges in the contemporary employment landscape.

Multiple factors, including social expectations, cultural norms, and public policies influence this deeply rooted and complex phenomenon. According to a study by Moss-Racusin and colleagues (2012), gender bias can manifest itself in different educational contexts, influencing teachers' perceptions and expectations of students. This study highlights how implicit biases can influence the assessment of student's academic merit, leading to differential treatment based on gender and limiting opportunities for learning and development. The study indicates that recognising and eliminating gender bias is crucial to promoting equity and student success in education. In guidance, it could

translate into suggesting academic and career paths that reflect gender. Likewise, students need to recognise how these biases may influence their answers to guidance tests and their future choices. For example, a boy might feel socially conditioned to choose a profession considered 'masculine' even though his true inclinations and passions are in a traditionally 'feminine' field, such as helping and caring. Gender bias can lead students to conform to societal expectations regarding gender roles, thus limiting their opportunities and self-determination. Students should be encouraged to critically reflect on such gender stereotypes and make choices based on their abilities and interests, regardless of society's gender expectations. Teachers' attention is drawn to the fact that an initial analysis of the profiles of the students to whom guidance questionnaires were administered as part of the Calling project revealed that most of the female students at the Orte school who completed the tests had a Social (S) profile, in line with a potential gender bias associating women with the helping professions.

Guidance Recommendations: *Before interpreting results, teachers need to consider possible external influences and evaluate students objectively, based on their actual abilities and interests, rather than preconceived gender expectations. While teachers cannot control whether gender bias affects students' test responses, they can mitigate its effects by recognising its possible influence when interpreting test results. It might be useful to ask oneself the following questions: "Could I be influenced by gender stereotypes when assessing students and their occupational preferences?"; "Have I considered all possible motivations behind the student's responses, regardless of their gender?"; "Is there concrete evidence to support the idea that certain interests or skills are related to gender?"; "Am I taking students' actual interests and abilities into account or am I emphasising social expectations regarding gender?"*

The phenomena described so far can significantly influence test results, especially in sensitive contexts such as work preferences and personal values. Despite these challenges, teachers are in a privileged position to interpret test results, as they have in-depth knowledge of their students gained through daily interaction and direct observation. This allows them to evaluate test results with caution and open-mindedness, recognizing that discrepancies between test results and what they know about children are inevitable and provide an opportunity for further exploration and understanding of individual nuances. Only through a holistic and reflective approach to the interpretation of guidance tests can teachers provide effective and targeted support to students in their guidance and personal development.

3.3 HOW TO TAKE CARE OF STUDENTS' VULNERABILITIES

People with potential vulnerabilities (e.g. low socio-economic status, migrants, disabled, members of LGBTQIA+ community, etc.) may face specific obstacles in planning their future: **lower self-esteem and ambition, difficulty in defining one's identity, scarce cultural/social capital**, etc. These are concrete obstacles that counsellors have to recognize and try to mitigate or remove when conducting guidance sessions. This was evaluated as a priority of the project and became its Objective n.2: "to enable teachers to apply inclusive guidance practices towards students in vulnerable conditions, in order to prevent the transmission of existing inequalities in the professional sphere." Project activities were intended to reach a twofold result: **to raise teachers'**



awareness of the impact of vulnerable conditions on career choices and **to transfer to them some guidelines** to take charge of the main vulnerabilities, in order to prevent the transmission of existing inequalities.

To this aim, each school was called to focus on the type of vulnerability that was most common for them, whose students face more difficulties in planning their professional paths. Teachers were asked to produce a document including a **literature review** on the selected vulnerability and a section with **guidelines and practical suggestions** to tackle that vulnerability, based on scientific indications and on best practices already tested in their schools. You can find in attachment all the documents produced by the schools, in particular:

- I.O. Orte – Orte, Italy: **Immigration and Foreign Students**
- Liceul Teoretic "Ovidius" – Costanta, Romania: **Socio-economic vulnerabilities**
- 53rd Lyceum of Athens - Athens, Greece: **Students living in low-income families**
- Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago - Palmela, Portugal - **Low socio-economic status**

3.4 HOW TO RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRES RESULTS TO STUDENTS WITH CAREER CONVERSATIONS AND HOW TO SUPPORT THEIR PLANNING OF THE FUTURE

AN INTRODUCTION TO CAREER CONVERSATION MODELS – *Silvia Fabbi (EULAB)*

When returning questionnaires results to students by career conversation, it is important to promote **narratability**.

Narratability is the ability to talk about oneself, become an active part in one's own story through questions addressed to the student, and then move on to a **self-reflection** on what the student loves to do, his progress, his vocations, and then arriving at **agency**, i.e. the creation of a student portfolio and therefore the planning of his future.

In this process the teacher is nothing more than a **guide**, a mentor who helps the student to design his life, to make each of them understand their uniqueness, but above all to trace the trajectories towards the future. The goal is not just to make people understand what job they want to do, but who they are and what they are capable of doing.

At the heart of these suggestions is narrative career counselling, a basis for facilitating students to develop their own stories and subjective careers.

Savickas suggests that career building is about transformation of a personal problem. Career stories explain why an individual made choices and explain them the meanings that guided those choices.

A career story "...tell like yesterday's self it has become the self of today and will become the self of tomorrow"

CAREER CONVERSATION IN ACTION: GET TO KNOW THE STUDENTS

a) Personal questions to promote Narratability

Here are the Areas and the Questions to start a career conversation. Some Areas, such as Skills and Strengths / Values, are inspired by the results of the questionnaires.

The Areas:

- Skills and Strengths
- Values
- Interests
- Dislikes
- Preferences

Questions sample:

Skills and Strengths

- What have you always been naturally good at?
- What can't you keep yourself from doing?

Values

- Looking back, what's always been most important to you in life and in work?
- What are your top three values or things you hold most dear?

Interests

- What do you enjoy learning about most?
- What do you wish you had more time for?

Dislikes

- What tasks routinely get pushed to the bottom of your to-do lists?
- What bores you?

Preferences

- How do you like to work/study?

b) A support tool to help defining the self: Personal Portfolio

Student portfolios represent a powerful **reflective tool**, as they can help students keep track of their development. A student portfolio is defined as a collection of student work that illustrates the **student's efforts, progress, or achievement in given areas**.

The intrinsic merit of learning portfolios is that they involve students in the process of reflection, encouraging them to think about their **achievements and communicate a sense of the learning experience** as a coherent, unified process. In other words, the value of portfolios lies not only in engaging students to collect representative samples of their work for assessment or career preparation, but also in **addressing vital reflective questions:**

what have I learned?

why did I learn?

how did I learn?

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN PLANNING THEIR FUTURE

a) Useful web portals on labour market information:

CEDEFOP Skills Intelligence Portal: the web portal reports information and statistics for each EU country on existing professional figures (number, level of employment, salary), economic sectors (professional figures present, overall level of employment, levels of qualifications required). The "Themes" section is very useful, offering data and statistics on the main ongoing trends (new skills, new professional figures, changes associated with digital transformation, etc.)

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-intelligence>

CEDEFOP Skills-OVATE portal: the web portal reports information and statistics for each EU country based on the analysis of job vacancies online. The portal therefore offers evidence-based information on the demand for professional figures and skills required by companies, photographing the main trends in real

time.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-online-vacancies>

EUROPASS portal: the Europass portal, available in all EU languages, is aimed at promoting mobility between EU countries. It offers information on: study and work opportunities in all EU countries, job market, recognition of qualifications in Europe, mobility support.

<https://europass.europa.eu/select-language?destination=/node/1>

b) A support tool to help students in planning the next steps of their career:

Below you will find ready-to-use guidelines to help each student to elaborate and write down his/her action plan for the next future, that can be considered as the final step of a guidance service. The tool is taken from the *My Career Story* interview by Savickas & Hartung (2012).

You are now ready to make a plan. Your plan has three parts that involve reflecting on, telling, and performing your story.

REFLECT on what you discussed with your teacher/counsellor to set goals for the next chapter of your life-career. The goal you select should be something that will allow you to enact, or bring to life your purpose. Therefore, select a goal that is achievable (you have enough time, resources, and energy to do it), believable (you believe you can do it), concrete (it is measurable and specific), and desirable (you want to do it). My goal, or goals, now are to:

TELL and talk about your story and the conclusions you have drawn from this guidance experience with valued audiences. A next step in enacting your career story is to share it with people you trust. Audiences might be family members, friends, mentors, coaches, and teachers. The more you tell your story, the more real and clear it becomes to you and the more confident you feel in living it. To make my story more clear and real, I will tell and discuss it with these valued audiences:

PERFORM your story by taking action. List two to four specific objectives, or small steps you will now take to move you from where you are today to the goals you listed above. For ideas on steps to take consider the following possibilities:

To commit to a tentative decision that I have made about my career plans, I will (check all that apply):



Talk to someone working in the occupation I am interested in
Listen to someone working in my occupation of interest
Read something about my occupation of interest
Search the world wide web for more information about this occupation
Visit places where people are working in this occupation
Observe people working in this occupation
Other

To try out my chosen occupation, I will (check all that apply):

Apply
Study
Volunteer
Apprentice
Search
Other

Therefore, to move toward reaching my goal or goals I will now:

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS for the future of MY COMPASS PROJECT – Anastasia Murzenkova (EULAB)

MY COMPASS CAREER CONVERSATION PLATFORM composed of:

- Presentation of PERSONAL AREAS questions
- Collection of all Calling results
- My Compass Student portfolios (where students can upload material like curricula and extracurricular activities and reflect on what they have achieved)
- Carrer conversations repository by teachers

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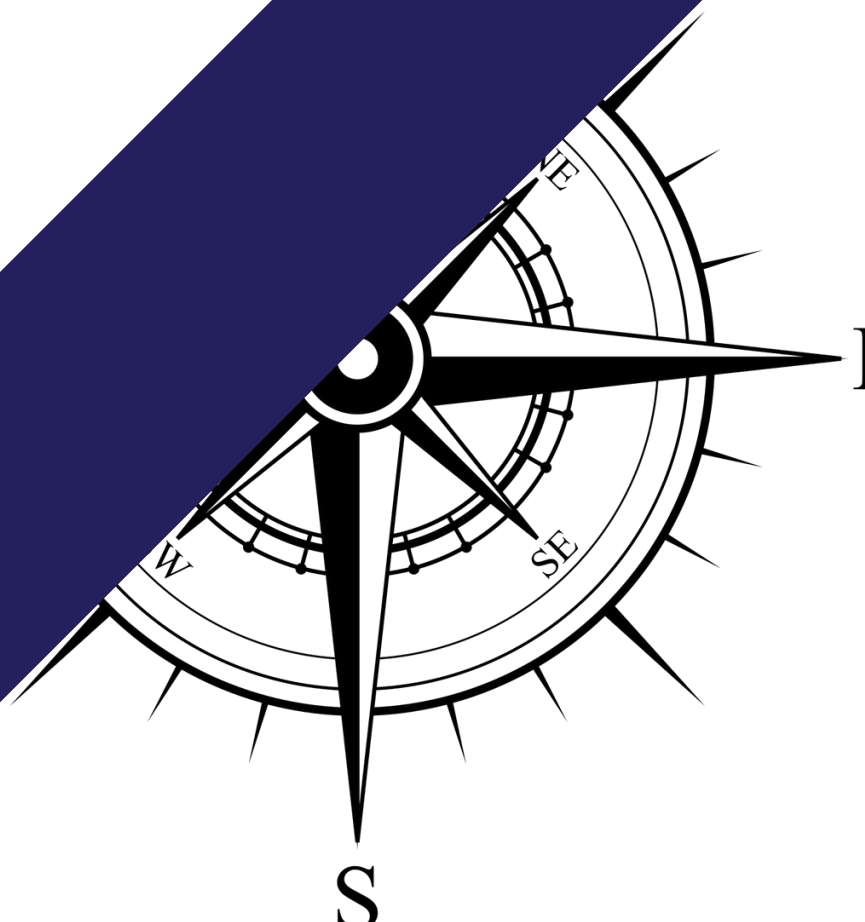
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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

Methodological Toolkit

ATTACHMENT 1 - Case Studies on the analysis of
questionnaires results

Five Case Studies are presented below, based on questionnaires really completed by students (anonymized).

Case Studies are intended to help you in doing an integrated analysis of results obtained by students at the three questionnaires., in order to find common elements, possible conflicts/contradictions and open questions to be discussed with each student.

Each Case Study is made of these sections:

- Results obtained at each of the 3 questionnaires
- Overall profile, with remarks on most relevant elements
- Elements of consistency and/or contradiction
- Professional implications
- Recommended questions

In each step of the analysis process, it is necessary to confront the results and reflections/insight emerged with available evidences about the student, and also to reflect on possible biases/prejudices incidence.

It is worth noting that there is no single, definitive way of interpreting results. These Case Studies are intended to suggest an approach to interpreting the results, in order to open up useful reflections on possible future career paths together with each student.

Here are some guidance pillars to bear in mind when analyzing questionnaires results:

- Questionnaires results are not the end point of the guidance process; they are rather inputs to start a discussion
- Questionnaires results inform not only and not necessarily on preferred occupations, but also on dimensions such as preferred form of employment, nature of organization, type of job tasks, work environment, etc.
- The expected outcome of a career guidance session is not always a decision of the student on his/her career
- Results' interpretation is influenced by bias and social/cultural influences in general: if not addressed, risks may outweigh the benefits

CASE STUDY 1

Analysing the results at the three tests carried out by S., the following characteristics emerge:

Professional interests:

Profile: IAR

S. shows a combination of preferences for Investigative (I), Artistic (A), and Realistic (R) professions. She shows a strong interest in learning and independence, as well as a deep creative and analytical sensibility. She finds satisfaction in following rules and concrete procedures and avoiding social and administrative activities. She is distinguished by her intelligence and sensitivity, as well as her ability to generate original ideas. The type that most resembles her is the Investigative (I), which emphasises an analytical and creative nature, enriched by deep thoughtfulness and reserve.

Universal values:

S.'s scores on both axes Self-enhancement (80%)/Self-transcendence (80%) and Openness to change (81%) / Conservation (73%) do not suggest clear value inclinations. Overall, moderately higher percentages are found for the values of Universalism, Motivation, Hedonism, Achievement, and Security. Less prioritised values seem to be Power and Tradition.

Character Strengths:

According to the VIA Survey, S. shows strengths such as Perspective, Humility, Creativity, Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence, and Curiosity. Her capacity for perspective enables her to understand situations from multiple angles and to guide others towards effective solutions. Her humility gives her a balanced self-confidence and a propensity for adaptation and constant improvement. S.'s creativity manifests itself through the generation of original and innovative ideas that are useful in tackling daily challenges. In addition, her appreciation for beauty and excellence translates into a sensitivity towards aesthetics and competence, driving her to strive for perfection in her endeavours. Finally, her curiosity drives her to explore new ideas and experiences, fuelling her constant quest for knowledge and personal growth.

Overall profile:

S. shows a combination of preferences for Investigative (I), Artistic (A), and Realistic (R) occupations, emphasising a wide range of interests and abilities. S. emerges as a person with creative and analytical sensibility, which manifests itself both in the interest in learning and independence, typical of people with Investigative (I) inclinations, and in the propensity for concreteness and manual dexterity, common to the Realistic profile. Her passion for creativity and culture, highlighted in the Artistic profile, adds a more expressive and innovative dimension to her working personality. Although she does not show clear inclinations towards universal values, S. demonstrates a considerable focus on values such as Universalism, Motivation, Hedonism, Achievement, and Security. This mixture of values reflects her eclectic nature and openness to change, characteristic of someone who is balanced between different needs and expectations. The strengths identified in the VIA Survey - Perspective, Humility, Creativity, Appreciation for beauty and excellence, and Curiosity - fit perfectly with the results of the professional interest tests. Her ability for perspective and humility makes her particularly suited to leadership roles that require a broad vision and effective communication with the team. At the same time, her creativity and curiosity drive her to explore new solutions and innovative approaches.

Some remarks on the results:

From an initial consideration of S.'s results, some points would require further exploration for a deeper understanding.



S. emerges as a person endowed with great curiosity and creativity, qualities that can be invaluable while at school. Exploring how these qualities can be cultivated and applied in the academic environment could help stimulate S.'s interest and involvement in studying and learning.

While showing a certain focus on values such as universalism, motivation and hedonism, the lack of clear inclinations might indicate an opportunity to explore S.'s values in more depth and how they influence her professional and life choices.

No significant discrepancies seem to emerge between the results of the different tests, suggesting a certain consistency in the overall profile.

However, it might be useful to further explore how these characteristics manifest themselves in specific contexts, such as the school or work environment, to identify opportunities for personal growth and development. For example, it might be interesting to assess how S. can use her creativity and analytical skills to solve problems or tackle academic challenges. Furthermore, it might be useful to explore how S. can apply her perspective and ability to understand situations from multiple angles to collaborate effectively with others and achieve common goals.

Remarks regarding inconsistencies/contradictions between the results of the three tests:

When profiling S., several convergences between the results can be observed.

The RIASEC results indicate a strong inclination towards investigative, artistic and realistic activities. This is in line with her personal strengths, such as perspective, creativity, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and curiosity. In general, S.'s results indicate an interest in learning, creativity, and the search for meaning.

No particular inconsistencies seem to emerge from the results.

The universal values indicate a moderate priority for values such as universalism, motivation, hedonism, achievement, and security, the occupational interests show a preference for activities combining investigative, artistic, and realistic aspects. It might be interesting to explore how these occupational preferences are reflected in S.'s personal values and how they influence her future career choices.

The strengths highlighted in the VIA Survey are in line with universal values such as humility, creativity, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and curiosity; it might be interesting to further explore how these strengths influence S.'s values and vice versa. For example, how curiosity might guide her value priorities or how the appreciation of beauty and excellence might influence her life and career choices.

Professional implications:

Considering S.'s achievements, occupational implications could include tasks and jobs involving investigative, analytical, and creative activities.

Given her preference for investigative activities and analytical skills, S. could find employment as a biologist, chemist, physicist, laboratory technician and in general in scientific research environments. Her propensity for data analysis and the search for meaning could be enhanced in this context. S.'s analytical skills, together with her creativity, could make her suitable for roles such as programmer, analyst programmer or game developer in the IT field. Her predisposition towards concrete activities and desire for aesthetic research could find an outlet in the development of innovative and visually appealing solutions. She could also consider academic or research careers, where she could further her interests and contribute to the development of knowledge in areas such as biology, chemistry, computer science or other scientific fields. The combination of creative and analytical skills could make S. suitable for roles in the arts and culture sector, such as designer, illustrator or art critic. Her aesthetic sensitivity and desire for the pursuit of beauty could find expression in these areas.

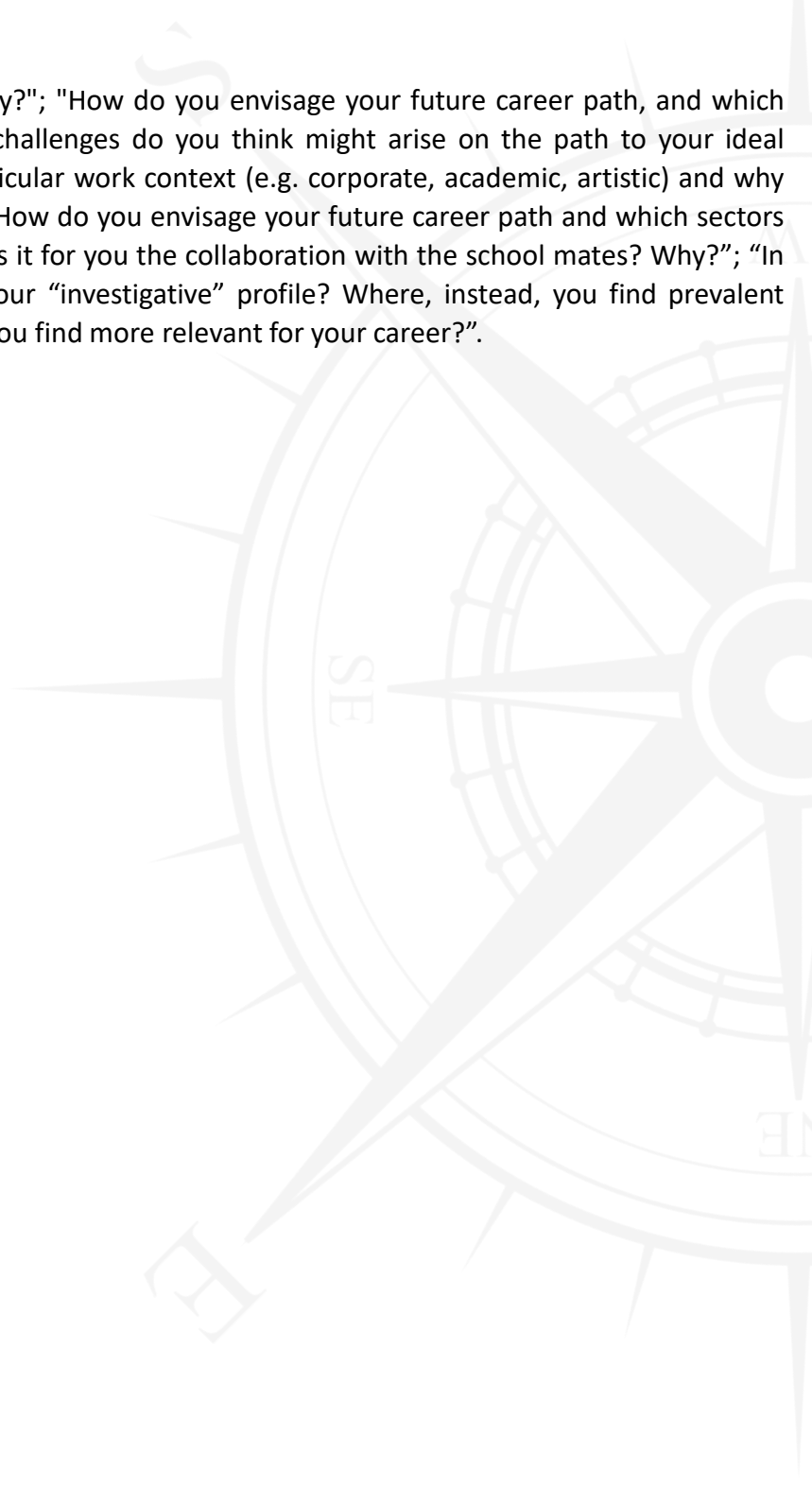


Considering S.'s skills and preferences, she could find opportunities in different work contexts, such as private companies, research institutes, technology start-ups, and arts and cultural sectors. Her investigative, creative and analytical skills could be enhanced in roles related to research and development, technological innovation, artistic production or strategic planning. In any context, S. could contribute to the success of the organisation through her perspective, humility, creativity, appreciation for beauty and curiosity, and promoting innovation and progress.

Recommended questions:

Some useful questions for S. could be:

"Do you agree with the test results? If yes/no, why?"; "How do you envisage your future career path, and which sectors or roles interest you the most?"; "What challenges do you think might arise on the path to your ideal career?"; "What appeals to you most about a particular work context (e.g. corporate, academic, artistic) and why do you feel you can contribute in that context?"; "How do you envisage your future career path and which sectors or roles interest you the most?"; "How important is it for you the collaboration with the school mates? Why?"; "In which activities/domains do you find prevalent your "investigative" profile? Where, instead, you find prevalent your "artistic" profile? Following, which elements you find more relevant for your career?".



CASE STUDY 2

Analysing the results at the three tests carried out by C., the following characteristics emerge:

Professional interests:

Profile: SRE

The RIASEC test indicates a prevalent Social (S) profile, suggesting that C. is more likely to choose professions that involve meaningful interactions with people and caring activities. The presence also of Realistic (R) and Enterprising (E) type traits indicates a preference both for professions with social utility that allow her to make products with her own hands and for activities in which she can exert her influence towards the realisation of common goals.

Universal values:

C.'s value preferences lie predominantly along the Openness to change/Conservation axis, with an imbalance towards the Conservation pole (90%). The highest values refer to Conformity (92%), Achievement and Security (92-93%) and Self-direction (88%). This suggests a certain resistance to change and a strong propensity for Achievement. C. also shows a strong commitment to values such as Benevolence and Universalism, reflecting a deep consideration for the well-being of others and a tendency to promote social justice.

Character Strengths:

According to the VIA Survey, C. possesses strengths such as Courage, Love, Prudence, Appreciation of beauty and excellence, and Kindness. These traits can positively influence her interpersonal relationships and her ability to face challenges with determination and compassion.

Overall profile:

C. emerges as a person with a strong inclination towards Social work (S) and the welfare of others. C. also emerges as having Realistic (R) and Enterprising (E) traits, which makes her inclined towards concrete activities through which she can exert influence on others. Her profile is characterised by a combination of empathic, caring and leadership-oriented traits, which make her suitable for roles involving meaningful interactions with people and the promotion of individual and collective well-being. Her traits of Entrepreneurship are consistent with her prevailing values of Achievement and Self-direction, just as her Realistic traits are consistent with her high score in the values of Security and Conformity. C. emerges predominantly as a Social type, and in fact shows high scores in values such as Benevolence and Universalism, suggesting a propensity to care for others. The strengths that emerged, especially kindness, love, and courage, are consistent with this picture.

Some remarks on the results:

C. emerges as a person with a strong inclination towards social work and the welfare of others. Her RIASEC profile indicates a preference for professions that involve her interpersonal and empathic skills, highlighting a natural inclination towards helping others and caring work. This is in line with her high values of Benevolence, Universalism and Kindness, which indicate a strong commitment to the welfare of others and the promotion of social justice. At the same time, C. seems to prefer environments and professions that offer and guarantee stability, security and predictability. The test results suggest some areas that might need further exploration. For example, the moderate score on motivation might indicate a need to examine more closely the sources of C.'s motivation and identify strategies to stimulate her commitment and involvement at work. In addition, it might be useful to explore the significance of her scores on Self-direction and Openness to Change to understand how these values influence his work preferences and flexibility in facing new challenges.



Remarks on consistencies/contradictions between the results of the three tests:

Although C. emerges predominantly as a Social type in the RIASEC test, her results on the PVQ indicate a lower score for Benevolence and a higher score for Self-direction. Similarly, the high score in Self-direction appears distant from the relevance for C. of values such as Tradition, Conformity and Security and the strength of Prudence. It would be useful to explore how she would reconcile these aspects in her career path.

Although the VIA Survey highlights strengths such as Kindness, a preference for leadership and success emerges in the RIASEC test. This discrepancy could indicate a challenge in balancing the desire to help others with personal ambition.

When returning the results to C., it is important to consider social expectations regarding certain careers or sectors. Her interest in social work could be enhanced in professions such as social work, teaching or work in the non-profit sector. C.'s social orientation could be complemented by her leadership skills and courage, enabling her to excel in roles involving the management of social groups or projects. Her kindness and humility could make her particularly suitable for professions related to social work or education.

However, it is essential to emphasise that her skills and passions can be applied in a wide range of professional contexts and that exploring different options can be beneficial in identifying the most rewarding path.

Professional implications:

Considering C.'s RIASEC profile (SRE), it is evident that she prefers activities that involve meaningful interactions with people and a strong commitment to promoting the well-being of others. This profile suggests that C. might excel in roles that require empathy, persuasion and leadership, where she can have a positive impact on the lives of others and guide them towards common goals.

For example, in sports-related professions as a coach or physical education teacher, C. could use her ability to relate to others and motivate them to reach their physical and mental potential. Even jobs in public safety, such as in the police, could enable her to use her skills of persuasion and leadership to ensure the safety and well-being of the community, values that are important to her.

Similarly, in the field of aesthetics, as a beautician or tattoo artist, C. could offer clients a cosy and reassuring environment, practising her empathy and generosity in caring for others.

The professions suggested for C. are based on her skills and characteristics as evidenced by her RIASEC profile, offering her job opportunities that enhance her desire to help others and promote social welfare.

In terms of professional implications, C. could find job satisfaction in a wide range of sectors and contexts. Given her strong inclination towards social work and the welfare of others, she might be particularly suited to roles in social work, teaching or counselling. For example, she could work as a social worker in a non-profit organisation dedicated to the protection of human rights or as a counsellor in a school to support students in their personal growth and development. Due to her empathic nature and her inclination to care for others, C. could also consider leadership roles in organisations that help people in vulnerable situations, such as the manager of a social work centre or coordinator of volunteer projects. Her kindness and commitment to social justice could find excellent expression in contexts that promote diversity and inclusion, such as international human rights organisations or government offices dedicated to social inclusion.

Considering her high score on the values of Conformity, Achievement, and Security, it might be important for C. to find a work environment that offers stability and opportunities for professional growth. She might be attracted to organisations with a corporate culture that is oriented towards valuing employees and recognising individual merit.

Since C. also shows some versatility in her work preferences, she might be interested in exploring roles that allow her to make products with her hands or to work in more goal-oriented contexts. For example, she might consider a career in handicrafts or design, where she could put her ability to work with physical materials into practice.

Recommended Questions:

It might be useful to ask C. what motivates her most in pursuing a professional career and what past experiences have influenced her choices and aspirations. This could provide further insight into her motivations and enable her to identify opportunities that best suit her personal needs and goals.

Some possible questions to ask C. could be:

"The tests show a strong orientation towards social work and a strong drive for self-fulfillment, do you agree with these results? If yes/no, how come?"; "Values such as safety, conformity to rules, and respect for traditions emerge from the tests as relevant for you; do you agree with these results? How do you think they may influence your choices for the future?"; "C., given your strong orientation towards social work and caring for others, do you feel more fulfilled when you are at the centre of a group guiding and supporting people?" or do you prefer to have a more independent role and focus on individual support?"; "In what kind of situations, if you think back to your experiences (at school or in other extracurricular contexts) did you feel motivated? Can you give examples?"; "What kind of supporting activities do you prefer the most? What social aim you would like to pursue? (important to check possible contradiction with Conservative values)"; "How important it is for you to face clear tasks and procedures? How do you feel when faced with uncertain situations? Have you considered other professions (e.g. associated with Realistic profile)?"

Teachers are advised to ask open-ended questions, allowing the student to argue and talk about themselves. It may be useful to ask the student to relate concrete examples and experiences.

For more in-depth guidance on this, please refer to the Guidelines on the *Career Conversation* model.

CASE STUDY 3

Analysing the results at the three tests carried out by M., the following characteristics emerge:

Professional interests:

Profile: REI

M. shows a clear preference for the 'Realistic' (R) type according to the RIASEC test. This indicates a preference for practical occupations involving manual and mechanical skills, with a strong aptitude for following rules and making concrete products. M. also presents personality traits 'Enterprising' (E) and 'Investigative' (I), suggesting an interest in both leadership and in-depth analysis. The profile suggests that M. is described by others as a concrete, steady, decisive, and genuine person who prefers a practical approach to problem-solving.

Her analytical and leadership skills could make her suitable for roles that require an in-depth understanding of how machines and objects work, as well as the ability to solve problems and find solutions that bring benefits, including economic ones.

Universal Values:

M.'s value inclinations on the Openness to change/Conservation axis lie mainly along the Conservation pole (83%), suggesting a limited openness to change, whereas on the Self-enhancement/Self-transcendence axis, M. shows a greater inclination for Self-enhancement (77%), suggesting a priority in pursuing personal interests and self-fulfilment. An interest in Hedonism and Achievement also emerges, indicating a willingness to pursue individual goals and personal growth. Conformity and Security as predominant values for M. This suggests a tendency to comply with established social norms and to seek stability as an outcome of his choices.

Character Strengths:

According to the VIA Survey, M. displays significant strengths, including a Love of knowledge, Humility, Prudence, Honesty, and Gratitude. These traits can be valuable in the professional context, contributing to her ability to learn, objective evaluation of his skills, ability to reflect before acting, sincerity in relationships and gratitude towards others.

Overall Profile:

M. emerges with a strong inclination towards practical and concrete work, in line with her Realistic (R) profile according to the RIASEC test. This preference for practical and concrete activities is consistent with the values that emerged, where a tendency towards Conservation, security, and personal self-direction predominates. However, it is interesting to note that M. also shows traits such as 'Enterprising' (E) and 'Investigative' (I) according to the RIASEC, indicating an interest in both leadership and in-depth analysis.

This profile suggests that M. might find career satisfaction in roles that combine the practical, hands-on aspect of the job with opportunities for leadership and in-depth analysis. For example, she might excel in professions related to the direction or coordination of business technology sectors, where her analytical and leadership skills can be fully brought into play. In addition, she could find gratification in trading or repairing precision products, where she can put her practical skills into practice and contribute to the realisation of concrete goals.

Her strengths, such as a love of knowledge, prudence, and gratitude, may be valuable in the professional context, contributing to her ability to adapt and excel in a variety of roles and work environments. In addition, the combination of values reflects a willingness to pursue individual goals and personal growth, suggesting that M. may be motivated to seek opportunities that allow her to develop her skills and realise her full potential.

Some remarks on the results:

M. shows a clear preference for practical and concrete professions involving manual and mechanical skills. This kind of orientation might make her suitable for roles in the technology sector, such as IT consultant or precision products operator. Furthermore, her universal values, such as Tradition and Conformity, may make her a reliable and rule-abiding employee, suitable for structured and hierarchical working environments.

It is important to consider how M. can integrate her interests and values in the social and professional context. It might be useful for her to find a balance between her preference for concrete activities and the need to interact with others in a work context.

Remarks on consistencies/contradictions between the results of the three tests:

M. emerges as a realistic type in the RIASEC test, whereas the PVQ results show a moderate score for Conformity and a high score for self-direction. This discrepancy could generate a tension between the preference for practical work and the tendency towards self-direction and independence. M. might find it difficult to fully express her individuality in roles that mainly require technical and pragmatic skills. Moreover, her tendency towards self-direction might conflict with the need to follow strict procedures and directives in certain work contexts. It would be interesting to explore how M. would deal with this potential inconsistency in her career path.

Although M. shows a strong preference for traits such as humility and prudence in the VIA Survey, her results at RIASEC indicate a preference for leadership and success. This discrepancy might highlight a challenge in balancing modesty and reflection with the pursuit of power and professional success. It might be useful to explore how M. manages her desire for success with her tendency towards humility and prudence.

Professional implications:

M. also shows traits of the type 'Enterprising' (E) and 'Investigative' (I) according to RIASEC. This suggests that she might find satisfaction in roles that combine the practical, hands-on aspect of the job with opportunities for leadership and in-depth analysis. These could include positions such as technical specialist, technical operator or IT consultant.

For example, M. could excel in professions related to directing or coordinating business technology sectors, where she can apply her analytical skills to lead the team towards successful goals. In addition, roles as an IT consultant or programmer analyst could allow her to use her IT skills to develop innovative solutions.

Similarly, M. could find job satisfaction as a trader or repairer of precision products, where she can apply her technical skills to offer quality services and generate profits through the sale and repair of electronic instruments, for example.

Her universal values, such as tradition, Conformity, and Security, suggest a propensity to respect established social norms and to seek stability as an outcome of her choices. This could make her suitable for roles where reliability and compliance with rules are required, such as in structured and hierarchical societies.

In the employment context, she could find employment in a variety of sectors and types of companies. For example, she could work as an industrial automation technician in manufacturing companies, where her practical skills would be crucial for the installation and maintenance of industrial automation systems. Similarly, she could work as a data analyst at a consulting firm, where she could use her analytical skills to examine large amounts of data and identify significant trends for corporate clients. M. could find an ideal working environment in structured and organised contexts, such as large public companies, where her propensity for compliance and stability could be enhanced. Here, she could have roles that require reliability and compliance, such as in banking, administrative, or legal sectors.



Moreover, she could find satisfaction in creative and innovative fields, such as the IT or design industries, where she could express her resourcefulness and contribute to the realisation of innovative projects.

Recommended Questions:

Possible questions to explore the apparent discrepancies that emerged from M's results could be: "Do you agree with the results that emerged? If yes/no, why?" "In what kind of situations did you feel motivated when thinking about both school and extracurricular activities carried out so far?"; "Considering your preference for practical and concrete activities, do you feel stimulated by the possibility of finding creative and innovative solutions within structured and organised work contexts? Or would you prefer to explore roles that allow you to express your creativity and individuality more freely?"; "Given your strong orientation towards practical and concrete activities, how do you think you balance your tendency towards self-management and independence with the need to follow strict procedures and directives in certain work contexts?"





CASE STUDY 4

Analysing the results at the three tests carried out by D., the following characteristics emerge:

Professional interests:

Profile: CSA

D. shows a preference for Conventional professions (C) involving administrative and organisational activities. D. emerges as a precise, prudent, and conformist person, with a strong sense of order and methodicality. She also shows a predisposition towards the Social (S), with a natural inclination to help others and to work in a team. Her Artistic sensibility (A) emerges through her love of creativity and culture. Overall, D. could find satisfaction in roles that combine administrative aspects with opportunities for social interaction and creative expression, perhaps in organisational contexts that are structured but open to innovation and collaboration.

Universal Values:

D.'s value inclinations on the Openness to change/Conservation axis lie mainly along the Conservation pole (88%), suggesting a limited Openness to change, whereas on the Self-enhancement/Self-transcendence axis, D. shows a greater value preference towards the Self-transcendence pole, suggesting an interest in the well-being of others. Indeed, the percentages of the Benevolence (88%) and Universalism (89%) values are quite high. The values of Conformity (83%), Tradition (88%), Self-direction (92%), and Security (93%) emerge as particularly high. The lowest values are Stimulation (56%) and Power (61%).

Character Strengths:

The questionnaire shows that one of D.'s main strengths is Social Intelligence, which makes her able to adapt her behaviour to various contexts and understand the feelings of others. Equally high is her ability to judge, which makes her capable of making rational decisions and analysing situations objectively. D. emerges as an honest, genuine, and sincere person who maintains her integrity in every situation. Her Curiosity drives her to explore new experiences and acquire knowledge in challenging environments. Her passion for knowledge motivates her to constantly seek to learn and deepen her skills.

Overall profile:

D. shows a preference for conventional professions (C), with mainly administrative and organisational tasks. She emerges as a precise, cautious, and conformist-oriented person, but also shows a social disposition (S), with a strong desire to help others and work as part of a team. Her Artistic sensibility (A) is consistent with her strong point of love for creativity and culture. D. could find satisfaction in roles that combine administrative aspects with social interaction and creative expression, in organisational contexts that are structured but open to collaboration. Her social intelligence enables her to adapt and understand others, while her judgement makes her capable of rational decision-making. Her sincerity and passion for knowledge are her strengths, along with her curiosity that drives her to explore new experiences in challenging environments.

Some remarks on the results:

As it appears on initial reflection, some of D.'s findings would require further exploration. The high score on the benevolence and universalism assessment indicates a strong sense of altruism and a predisposition towards cooperation and solidarity. It would be interesting to examine how these values manifest themselves in her interactions with others and how they would influence her professional relationships.

Remarks on consistencies/contradictions between the results of the three tests:

In outlining D.'s profile, several elements emerge that converge between the results of the tests carried out.

The preference for conventional occupations (C) indicated in the RIASEC test and the interest in orderly and practical activities found in the VIA Survey test reveals a propensity towards roles that require a methodical and organised approach to work. In addition, the strong integrity and honesty found in the VIA Survey test align with the preference for values such as conformity and tradition, indicated in the PVQ test, suggesting consistency in maintaining behaviour congruent with personal values. Finally, the analytical and rational judgement skills shown in the VIA Survey test are in line with the preference for roles that require an objective assessment of situations and the ability to make logical decisions, as indicated in the RIASEC test.

Some discrepancies also emerge when comparing the different tests. For example, while on the one hand, the RIASEC test indicates an interest in conventional occupations (C), the VIA Survey test highlights an ability to adapt and understand wider social dynamics, suggesting a potential ambivalence between a preference for order and a predisposition to interact in variable social contexts. This discrepancy could generate tensions in delineating the ideal career path for D., who seems to seek both stability and flexibility in a work context. Similarly, the conventional interest profile (C) is in possible contradiction with the artistic profile (A).

Moreover, her tendency towards self-direction, hence autonomy, may conflict with values such as safety and conformity, which instead express the need to follow rigid procedures and directives in work contexts.

Professional implications:

With a preference for conventional professions and a flair for administrative and organisational tasks, D. could excel as an administrative clerk, secretary, or assistant in offices, companies or educational establishments. Her ability to follow rules and procedures precisely would also make her suitable for administrative or technical support roles.

D. could find employment opportunities in the education and training sector, e.g. as a teacher of technical subjects or as a support teacher. Alternatively, she could move towards the IT sector, working as a programmer, IT expert, or employee in IT offices. In line with the artistic interest profile (A), a further area of employment could be in the fashion industry, where she could work as an assistant or production assistant.

D. could fit well in both public and private contexts, as long as they offer a structured and organised environment. Educational institutions, companies, government offices, or non-profit organisations could offer job opportunities in line with her preferences and skills. Given her inclination for conventional professions, D. might feel more comfortable in formal, hierarchical organisational contexts where she can follow clear procedures and work in a stable, orderly environment.

Recommended Questions:

Possible questions to explore the apparent discrepancies that emerged from D.'s results could be: "Do you agree with the results that emerged? If yes/no, why?" "In what kind of situations did you feel motivated when thinking about both school and extra-curricular activities you have done so far?"; "How do you feel about following rules and routines within the school environment? Do you feel comfortable or would you prefer to have more space to explore new ideas?"; "What motivates you most about learning new things and facing new challenges at school?"; "How do you feel about adapting to new tasks or situations within the school?"

CASE STUDY 5

Analysing the results at the three tests carried out by S., the following characteristics emerge:

Professional interests:

Profile: ASE

S. strongly prefers the 'Artistic' type (A), indicating a propensity towards occupations involving creativity, expression and originality. However, she also shows Social (S) and Enterprising (E) traits, suggesting flexibility in her work preferences and an openness to roles involving meaningful interactions with others.

S. seems to prefer activities involving creativity and culture, showing originality and sensitivity. She is characterised by her empathy and helpfulness towards others, showing concern for the well-being of others. At the same time, she has a marked ambition and leadership ability, wishing to influence others and achieve success. She prefers to avoid mechanical, technical and scientific activities, seeking instead opportunities for creative and interpersonal expression. She is well suited to work contexts where she can lead and influence others or market her artistic creations.

Universal values:

S.'s value preferences lie mainly along the Self-enhancement (68%)/Self-transcendence (72%) axis. Scores on this axis are slightly higher than on the Openness to change/Conservation axis, suggesting no clear value inclinations. The results reflect an attitude towards genuineness, positivity and mutual respect. Her scores on Tradition and Universalism indicate modest regard for established social norms and a perspective more oriented towards individuality than interest in diversity and social justice.

Character Strengths:

According to the VIA Survey, S. highlights strengths such as Self-regulation, Humour, Honesty, Social intelligence and Kindness. These traits can positively contribute to her interpersonal relationships, emotional management and the creation of a collaborative and inclusive work environment.

Overall profile:

S. emerges as a person with a strong inclination towards artistic expression (A) and creativity, with strong interpersonal, empathic and caring skills towards others. This emerges not only through type A (Artistic) but also as type S (Social), consistent with her high scores in the Benevolence value (92%) in Schwartz's values questionnaire. Her original and sensitive nature finds expression in her inclinations towards artistic work and his focus on authenticity and humour in social interactions. One of S.'s strengths is humour, a characteristic often linked to creativity and the ability to handle stressful situations. These findings are further supported by the VIA data on Social Intelligence and Kindness. However, she also emerges as an Enterprising (E), showing a strong ability to influence others and leadership, in line with the high score at the Achievement value (92%).

The emerged value of Self-direction is consistent with her strength of Self-regulation, a quality related to the ability to keep impulses and emotions under control and to establish rules to follow to achieve a set goal. These characteristics are consistent with an Enterprising type (E). Overall, S. seems to show strong artistic and empathic qualities but also a strong tendency towards leadership and self-fulfilment.

Some remarks on the results:

S. emerges as a person with a strong inclination towards artistic and creative work, as indicated by her RIASEC profile and VIA strengths.

Her love for creativity and culture is also reflected in her high values of kindness, self-regulation and humour, which suggest an open, empathetic personality who can face challenges lightly and positively.

In some areas, results emerge that may require further exploration. The relatively low score on motivation and tradition might indicate a need to examine more closely the sources of S.'s motivation and her disposition to follow established social norms. Furthermore, the moderate score on universalism might suggest a need to explore more deeply her perspectives and values regarding diversity and social justice.

Remarks on consistencies/contradictions between the results of the three tests:

Despite the preference for the 'Artistic' type in the RIASEC test, the PVQ results indicate a relatively low score for hedonism and a higher score for achievement and security. This discrepancy could generate tension between the desire to explore one's creativity and the interest in personal success and security. It would be useful to explore how S. would reconcile these two aspects in her career path.

Although S. shows a strong preference for traits such as love and kindness in the VIA Survey, a preference for leadership and success emerges in the RIASEC test. This discrepancy could indicate a challenge in balancing the desire for meaningful relationships and helping others with personal ambition and professional success. Her artistic creativity and social intelligence would seem to give her the ability to adapt and collaborate with others. Her prudence and humour could add depth and authenticity to her work, enabling her to communicate with audiences effectively and engagingly.

It might be useful to explore how S. integrates her desire to collaborate with others with her interest in influencing and guiding others through a leadership role.

In returning the results to S., it is important to emphasise that her artistic and creative inclinations can be enhanced in a variety of work contexts, including roles in art, communication and design. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight that her empathetic approach and sense of humour can contribute to positive interpersonal relationships and promote a collaborative and inclusive working environment.

Professional implications:

Considering the test results, a possible career path for S. could be to work as an artist, writer, journalist, copywriter or in the field of web and digital communication. Her creative and sensitive nature could find expression in contexts that value originality and innovation, such as creative agencies, publishing or multimedia production. S. could find job satisfaction in organisations that promote diversity, inclusion and creative freedom, such as advertising agencies, design studios or companies in the entertainment and culture sector. Due to his inclinations towards autonomy and personal fulfilment, S. could find satisfaction in private or freelance-oriented job roles, where she can express her creativity and manage her work autonomously. In this context, she could find stimulation and personal fulfilment through the creation of artistic works, creative projects or entrepreneurial activities that reflect her innovative spirit and originality. Considering her strong predisposition towards social work and caring for others, she could find a stimulating and rewarding environment by participating in third-sector projects with social inclusion aims. Regarding relationships with colleagues and the work environment, S. may prefer collaborative and inclusive contexts where she can share ideas and experiences with like-minded people and feel part of a cohesive community. She may appreciate open, creative, and flexible work environments where she can freely express her creativity and actively contribute to the realisation of shared goals.

Recommended questions:

It might be useful to ask S. how she sees herself in her ideal work context and what her long-term aspirations and goals are. This could provide further insight into her professional motivations and desires, helping her to outline a satisfying and meaningful career path.



Some possible questions to explore apparent discrepancies that emerged from S.'s test results could be: "The tests show a strong inclination towards artistic work and a commitment to values such as self-regulation and humility: Do you find yourself in these results? If yes/no, how come?"

"Do you feel more motivated when you can express your creativity independently or do you prefer to collaborate with others to achieve common goals? In what kind of situations, if you think back to your experiences (at school or in other extracurricular contexts) did you feel motivated? Can you give examples?"

Teachers are advised to ask open-ended questions, which give the student the opportunity to argue and talk about themselves. It may be useful to ask the student to relate concrete examples and experiences.

For more in-depth guidance on this, please refer to the Guidelines on the *Career Conversation* model.





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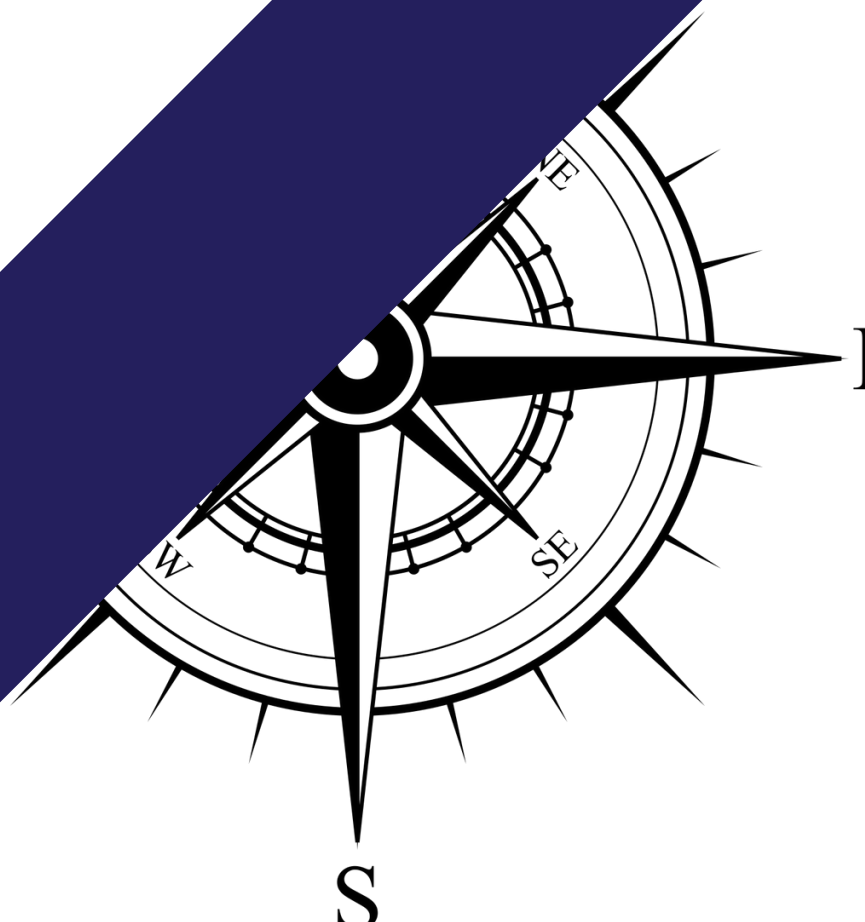
Thank You

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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

Methodological Toolkit

ATTACHMENT 2 - Guidelines on how to take care of
specific vulnerabilities



Each school was called to focus on the type of vulnerability (e.g. low socio-economic status, migrants, disabled, members of LGBTQIA+ community, etc.) that was most common for them, whose students face more difficulties in planning their professional paths. Teachers were asked to produce a document including a literature review on the selected vulnerability and a section with guidelines and practical suggestions to tackle that vulnerability, based on scientific indications and on best practices already tested in their schools

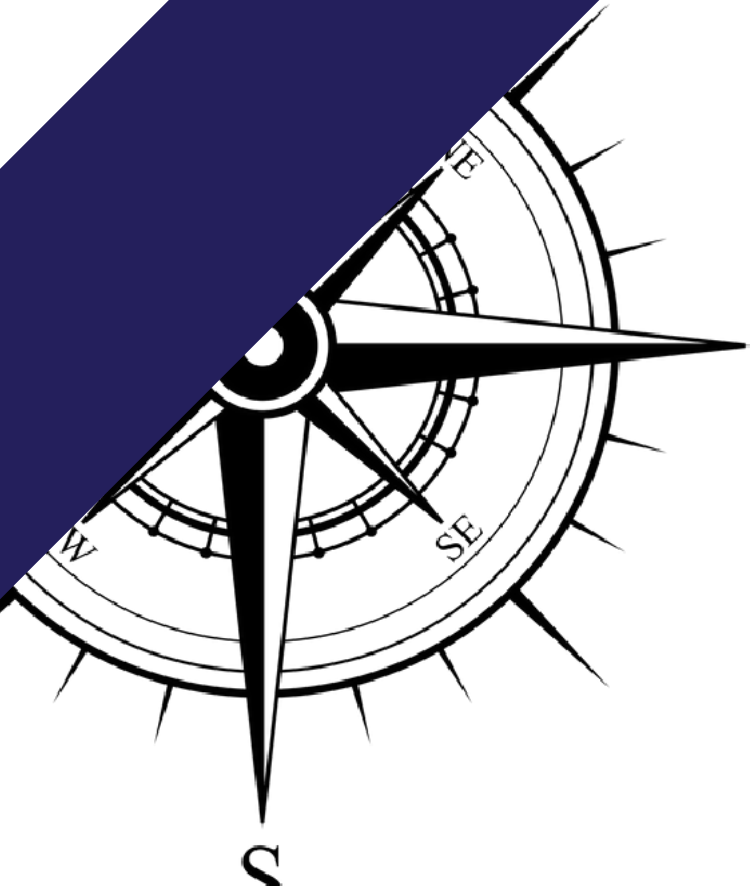
The guidelines are intended to reach a twofold result: to raise teachers' awareness of the impact of vulnerable conditions on career choices and to transfer to them some guidelines to take charge of the main vulnerabilities, in order to prevent the transmission of existing inequalities.

In the following pages you will find the document produced by each school, in particular:

- Liceul Teoretic "Ovidius" – Costanta, Romania: **Socio-economic vulnerabilities – PG. 3**
- 53rd Lyceum of Athens - Athens, Greece: **Students living in low-income families – PG. 27**
- I.O. Orte – Orte, Italy: **Immigration and Foreign Students – P. 36**
- Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago - Palmela, Portugal - **Low socio-economic status – PG. 58**



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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

**Vulnerabilities which impact negatively
students' ability to define and select
a future professional path.
The situation in Romania.**

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present how low socio-economic background affects students' career choices in Romania. It is undeniable that precarious financial conditions will impact negatively the overall development of a young person: their school performances, their social and emotional skills, their personal health and well-being, their future paths, all these will be affected adversely by the absence of resources. However, this paper focuses mainly on how low socio-economic conditions limit (and in some cases, block) young people's access to career choices suitable for their skills and competences. Although alleviating such conditions is the task of the government, some steps can be taken to ensure that all students can be assisted in designing their future paths in life. Which is why this paper includes suggestions on guidance and counselling activities which can be carried out in schools in order to mitigate the adverse effects low socio-financial background can have on students' professional development.

Students' access to adequate guidance and counselling services can be affected by a number of factors or vulnerabilities. Some of the most common **vulnerabilities** present in Romania's social tapestry are (in order of their presence/strength of impact): low income background, geographical placement (rural vs urban), ethnic groups / minorities, gender, etc. Generally, these factors coexist, i.e. a student can be from a low-income family, living in a rural area and belonging to a minority group. It is both impossible and impractical to try and analyze such vulnerabilities independently. However, low-income families exist in both settings – urban and rural – and their limited resources affect children's access to all available academic or professional paths.

Socio-economic vulnerabilities and their impact on children's future

The UNICEF Report "The State of Children in the European Union" (2024) mentions "child poverty (UNICEF, 2024)" as a determining factor affecting the academic and professional development of children throughout the EU.

"Too many children in the EU face **persistently high rates of poverty and social exclusion**, mental health challenges, and environmental dangers such as air pollution.
[...] [The EU] will also need to adapt to the multiple and often intertwining challenges

and **crises facing children in the EU today** in its new strategies, policies, plans and budgets – from mental health to climate change, **the cost-of-living crisis** to digital transformation.”

According to this report, **child poverty** is caused not only by low salaries of the family members, but also by a series of connected factors¹ such as living arrangements (single parent families), effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (lower employment stability), rising inflation and the effects of the war in Ukraine on local economies. All these conditions lead to a *new type of low-income families: families that can afford the day-to-day necessities but forego making long-term plans, including investing in their children's future, because of economic uncertainties.*

Socio-economic vulnerabilities in Romania and their impact on children's future

In 2016 the *Educated Romania* project began a multi-year national consultation led by the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, to discuss key challenges for education in the country and identify objectives for 2030. The project was based on findings of a national analysis of all components of the educational system. These findings show that in 2017 Romania's **early school leaving rate** was at 18.1%, nearly double the EU average (10.6%) of that year (OECD, 2020). This percentage includes both underage students who abandon studies because of **insufficient financial resources** and young adults who drop out of vocational education courses. In 2017, 15.2% of young adults (15-24 year-olds) in Romania were not in education, employment or training (NEET), one of the highest rates among EU countries (European Commission, 2019). It is also closely linked to the manner in which children move from one schooling stage to the next.

*“Several factors can contribute to early school leaving. These might relate to household issues, such as a **family's low income level, negative or low perceptions of the benefits and prospects associated with education**, or individual factors, such as the child being involved in seasonal work, having to care for younger siblings or having health related issues.”* (MNESR, 2015) and (OECD, 2020)

¹ “Since 2021, as countries began to recover from the pandemic, inflation has once again become a challenge for European economies, while at the same time **eating into the household budgets of families.**” (UNICEF, 2024)

Additional pressures to socio-economic vulnerabilities in Romania

In addition to the pressures created by limited financial resources, Romanian students must also face the challenges created by Romania's **early tracking system**. At the end of their 8th grade (ages 14-15), all Romanian students take the *National Exams* (in Romanian and Mathematics). Students are then distributed to high schools (9th grade) based **solely on these exam results**. These *high-stakes examinations* at such an early age have a series of cumulative negative effects:

- 1) → private tutoring is widespread for students preparing to take exams in Grade 8, increasing **systemic inequalities** by providing advantaged students with an advantage that their peers from lower income groups may not be able to access.
- 2) → as students prepare for examinations, they begin to resist classroom practice they see as irrelevant to test preparation; this leads to **disengagement** and a considerable **reduction in motivation** for learning since students will choose to focus only on the two subjects tested and, at the same time, hide or ignore gaps in their understanding of other subjects so as not to affect their general grades.
- 3) → the distribution to high schools happens in decreasing order of the average grade in the National Exams. If a student underperforms (because of exam anxiety, lack of preparation, etc.), his or her average grade will not provide them with sufficient chances to access a “better school”. This may lead to students finding themselves in schools or specializations which they would not have otherwise chosen, further deepening the disengagement with their own education and raising the chances of early school leaving.
- 4) → a “better school” is usually a theoretical high school. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds (most of them from low-income families who could not afford either private tutoring or simply transportation costs to school) will underperform in the National Exams and will find themselves in lower or vocational tracks at a very young age. This type of “early tracking” makes it increasingly difficult for a disadvantaged student to change tracks later, further limiting their future professional and life choices (OECD, 2020).
- 5) → although results in the National Exams are anonymized, the fact that students are “ranked” entirely based on their performance in the exam leads to a negative learning environment. Students who underachieve in these exams are often stigmatized or judged as inadequate, even

by themselves. This lowers their self-esteem and undermines their self-management competences. In the long run, they are more likely to become low-functional literates or to abandon school altogether.

6) → because of these *high-stakes exams* and the existing ranking system, vocational education is viewed as inadequate, marginalized and disconsidered because it is students with lower entrance grades that are sent to vocational schools. In addition, technological and vocational education is still in need of development and appropriate governmental support.

Romanian students aged 15 to 19 are usually enrolled in a 4-year stage of high-school (upper secondary) which can be theoretical, technological or vocational. Although compulsory education in Romania ends after grade 10, most students will complete the 11th and 12th grade and take the baccalaureate, a national exam consisting of exams in three subjects. The grade 12 baccalaureate exam selects students for academic tertiary programmes and currently sets very different expectations for learning compared to the curriculum (OECD, 2020).

Counselling and guidance in Romania

Counselling and guidance services are offered to Romanian students **in their schools** throughout their education (until grade 12) by their teachers and, occasionally, by a school counsellor. In 2006, “Counselling and orientation” was included in the national curriculum (national curriculum for grades 1 to 4 was published in 2013, for grades 5 to 8 in 2017 and for vocational schools in 2014 (World Bank, 2023)); at present this ‘subject’ is delivered to students in a distinct class.

Between grades 1 and 8, students have a compulsory class each week titled “Counselling and orientation”. This class is held by the teacher designated as “diriginte” (a liberal translation would be “form teacher”, “class tutor” or “class mentor”), irrespective of the teacher’s specialty subject. The ‘diriginte’ will plan and organize activities with the whole class intended to help students “learn to learn”, develop their self-awareness and self-management skills, and plan for their academic future.

In high school (grades 9 to 12, ages 15 -19) the “counselling and orientation” class is no longer compulsory; students can choose not to attend it with no effects on their grades or general evaluation. This class is also held by a teacher designated as ‘diriginte’. The purpose here is to help

students choose and plan their future professional or academic path, but with attendance not compulsory and in combination with the fact that any counselling is done with the **whole class**, this “counselling and orientation” is, at best, only partially effective. Those students who choose to attend may opt not to discuss publicly their issues, so the ‘counselling’ part is usually limited to generalities and non-specific general advice.

There are several drawbacks to this system of counselling and orientation:

1) the counselling and orientation services are not offered by an adult fully specialized in such services. Most teachers who are designated as ‘diriginte’ rely on their pedagogical training and common sense. These teachers have access to a **limited offer of free training courses** (World Bank, 2023)² in the field of career counselling, orientation or psychological support; moreover, time constraints and financial limitations prevent them from taking on additional training in these fields (most courses are held *during the school year* when teachers must focus on teaching their subject, student assessment, preparation of classwork and teaching materials, etc.).

2) helping students in lower secondary school (grades 5 to 8) determine their future academic path is considered pointless even by their teachers, considering that the choice of school will be determined by the students’ average grades in the National Exams in the 8th grade and not by their wishes or potential. Furthermore, the National Exams are in only two subjects which means the average grade, or ‘high school entrance grade’, **completely disregards students’ overall academic performance, their results in other subjects or areas and even their interests.**

3) each Romanian school should have a *School Counsellor* that is a fully trained child psychologist. However, this is partly true and usually only in urban settings. Schools located in rural areas generally do not have a full-time School Counsellor because of limited funds allocated by the Ministry of Education but also because there is a lack of specialists in child psychology.

4) the schools where there is a full time School Counsellor can have anywhere between 300 and more than 1000 students³. This makes the School Counsellor’s job nearly impossible: keeping track of so many students’ needs and offering personalized feedback and assistance is, to say the least, extremely challenging and demanding. In addition, the specialist support is delayed

² “Ministry of Education data (2022) show that an insufficient number of accredited free CPD courses are available for teachers (e.g. 8% in school year 2021-2022, which addressed COC topics), [while teachers’] initial training only includes an optional course on Counseling (psycho-pedagogical module).” (World Bank, 2023)

³ On average, in the 2022-2023 school year one school counsellor was responsible for 966 students and preschoolers, of which 570 in the middle and secondary cycle and 396 pre-school and primary pupils. (Ministry of Education data)

because of the sheer number of cases a School Counsellor needs to address.

5) high schools are divided into **theoretical**, **technological** and **vocational**, which means the “Counselling and Orientation” class is already limited by the specialization in which students find themselves. Students in *theoretical* high schools will seek advice and counselling only in areas related to their specialization (‘mathematics and informatics’, ‘natural sciences’, ‘social sciences’ or ‘philology’). Students in *vocational* settings are already limited in their choice of professional paths by the field in which they receive schooling and training.

In 2005, the **County Centers of Resources and Educational Assistance** have been created in order to provide specialized support to schools (for student orientation services, special needs resources, career counselling, etc.) or to disadvantaged groups (specific educational needs, psychological evaluation and psycho-pedagogical counselling, therapies addressing students diagnosed with various health/mental issues, etc.). However, these are **county** centers (usually in urban settings) and their staffing is below 50 specialists, which means their support is limited by the reduced number of human resources and time constraints.

There is a noticeable resistance to using the specialist services offered by the **CCREA**, mainly because there is an unmotivated fear of being labeled as unstable or inadequate if referred to a psychologist. Because of this unsubstantiated fear, parents are reluctant to heed the advice of teachers directing them to these specialists in child psychology and students prefer to mask or ignore their inadequacies lest they should have to face more pressure in their academic endeavours. This resistance is fuelled by the fact that the educational system encourages teachers to focus on top-performing students in view of their high-stakes exams and less on students who struggle in academic standardized tests or summative assessments (Kitchen & et.al., 2017)⁴.

Proposed and planned changes in the Romanian career orientation and guidance system

The *Educated Romania* project has already initiated several steps to address the issues listed above⁵. Romania has adopted a *National Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving* and is

⁴ “Students who do less well in academic tests **tend to receive less support** and are directed towards vocational programmes independent of whether this meets their learning interests and goals.” (Kitchen & et.al., 2017)

⁵ See project report page at <http://www.romaniaeducata.eu/rezultatele-proiectului/> and project page at <https://proiecte.pnrr.gov.ro/#/home>

developing an early warning system to identify **at-risk students**. For example, Romania has introduced after-school remediation programmes, integrated services in schools and second chance education programmes; however, the reach of these initiatives is limited (usually to urban settings) and some are yet to be fully implemented (due to reduced financial governmental support and a lack of specialists and human resources to man these programmes).

In 2017 a Joint Order (MM, MH, & ME, 2017) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education set the legal basis for the Pilot Project ***Integrated Community Services (ICS)***, an approach which functions on principles similar to the principles of **case management** and which is intended to prevent social exclusion and reduce poverty. The ICS includes services of school orientation and career counselling and addresses the needs of **vulnerable young people** (i.e. young people from low-income families) irrespective of their geographical setting (urban or rural). The methodologies created to support the functioning of *Integrated Community Teams* mention specifically the need to offer access to **sufficient career conversations with students in grades 8 and 12** because of their demonstrated efficiency in preparing young people for life.

Representatives of the **National Students' Council** have highlighted a number of issues which need to be addressed by the system:

- the large number of students assigned to a school counselor;
- the guidance time (the "Counselling and Orientation class") is devoted to other issues, usually administrative or organizational;
- students do not realize the need for counseling (World Bank, 2023).

Among the solutions they suggested is that **every student should attend at least one individual career counselling session** (the first solution on their list of proposals) (World Bank, 2023).

We find this proposal demonstrates what is perhaps the biggest flaw of School Orientation and Career Counselling in Romania: the fact that students (vulnerable or not) have little access to **individual counselling**. And the fact that students themselves feel the need for **individual conversations** with a professional equipped to guide them in their orientation process. While **whole class counselling** has its merits in that it promotes open discussions encouraging collaboration and communication which in turn creates a positive learning environment, it is undeniable that individual guidance sessions / career conversations would offer more effective support for young people in their search for their future paths in life.



To this end we will propose in the following section of this paper a series of activities which may contribute to a meaningful orientation process within the framework of the “Counselling and Orientation” classes as they happen at present in the Romanian system of education.

Furthermore, the suggested activities can be adapted to fit the constraints of **any formal system of education** since their purpose is to provide teachers with ideas they can modify as they see fit **according to the needs of their students**.

Practical suggestions for school orientation and career guidance sessions

The following suggestions for school orientation and career guidance sessions are for teachers who hold counselling classes with the whole class as part of their weekly schedule. We will also include suggestions for individual counselling activities. The purpose of these activities is to help teachers support all their students (not only those from challenging socio-economic backgrounds) in their journey of self-discovery. Hopefully, these activities will encourage students to plan for their future life paths in an informed manner. Although we are aware of the benefits of organizing career conversations individually with students, we must consider the time-constraints teachers face when dealing with whole classes. Furthermore, the following suggestions were created on the basis that the teacher is not a professional counsellor, and they are presented with the intention to help teachers save time in planning counselling classes.

Teachers' role

There are numerous approaches to counselling designed to help teachers coordinate whole class guidance sessions, each with its own merits. But before we delve into these, we must make it clear what teachers must understand about their role when they act as counsellors.

First and foremost, teachers must understand that when counselling a student they **do not teach**. They facilitate, they empower and they support. As **facilitators**, they help students become self-aware by encouraging them to discover their strengths, their qualities & flaws, their potential. They **empower** students by giving them space for thinking and understanding, by helping them discover and acknowledge their resources. They **support** students by being open-minded, unbiased and actively listening.

A teacher as counsellor

- asks open-ended questions **and resists answering them** for the student
- does not fix problems and does not take charge
- allows the student to **make decisions for themselves**
- develops **planning skills** and provides **accountability**; promotes long-term planning

- **is aware of** their own social and cultural biases or assumptions and resists them
- **actively listens** and **builds confidence** (without building false hope)
- promotes a **positive / growth mindset**

Students must understand that, during a guidance session, they must not expect answers from the teacher; teachers will only assist, support and guide them towards an answer.

Remember: this is not about teaching or learning. What students need to do is ask a lot of questions: ask their teacher, their peers, themselves. Counselling is a journey of self-discovery, and teachers as counsellors must make it clear to their students that it is their job to try and find answers or solutions in themselves.

Students must also understand that, during a guidance session, they must be honest about themselves. They must resist giving answers which they believe are expected of them. Low-performing students especially may be susceptible to providing answers which they believe are *acceptable answers*, out of fear of judgement or prejudice against them or their condition. Which is why the teacher's role as **supporter** is paramount.

Whole class activities

Most of the activities suggested here are intended to be carried out with the whole class. The first two (GROW and WOOP) are designed to be used whenever the teacher / counsellor feels his or her students need an opportunity to focus on their study paths and / or on themselves. The next suggestions were created on the succession of three natural stages in the guidance process: ENGAGE – EXPLORE – EXPERIENCE. While the first two can be carried out with the whole class, the last stage is recommendable to be performed in individual discussions teacher – student.

GROW

“GROW” is a model whose development is attributed to John Whitmore⁶. The acronym stands for “Goal, Reality, Obstacles/Options, Way forward”. For example, a student's **goal** would be to raise his or her grade in Mathematics. The **reality** is the current grade the student has in Mathematics; “reality” also includes the student's *honest assessment* of why their grade is at that level (he/she does not understand lessons; he/she does not allocate enough time, etc.) and also

⁶ John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 1992

their assessment of *how far they are from the set goal*. Once “reality” is defined (by the student), **obstacles** are easier to identify and nominate; e.g. ‘I don’t ask questions during classes’ or ‘I don’t spend more time studying’. It is important to note that the **obstacles** to be identified must be **internal**, that is they are caused by the student themselves and not by external factors (such as ‘The teacher does not explain clearly enough’). This, in turn, leads to **options**: the student makes a list of actions they can perform in order to deal with the identified obstacles. Out of the list of options, the student defines the **way forward**, that is the action steps they will take.

In class, GROW can be used as a strategy through which the teacher helps students discover what their limitations (obstacles) are in their journey to success. However, it must be noted that this strategy works better if the whole-class discussion is on a specific topic. **The more specific the goal, the more effective the strategy**. If the discussion is kept in abstract, general terms, it will be very difficult for teenagers to properly and honestly identify the **obstacles** and **options** available to them. For example, if the **goal** is “to be able to score highly in the National Exams”, the **obstacles** can range from personal preferences (e.g. ‘I don’t like the subject’) to personal circumstances (e.g. ‘I cannot afford private tutoring’).

As an activity, completing a GROW worksheet⁷ can take between 15 minutes and 50 minutes, depending on how open students are willing to discuss about their goals and obstacles. This activity can be followed by **individual discussions** with the students identified as ‘at-risk’ or ‘disengaged’ or ‘disadvantaged’. By carrying out the activity with the whole-class, the teacher will avoid singling out those students who are at risk or disadvantaged. At the same time, it will give the teacher a foundation on which to carry out individual discussions with those students.

WOOP

WOOP is a coaching tool created by Gabriele Oettingen, designed as a behaviour-change intervention on the psychological principle of “mental contrasting” (NYU). The acronym stands for **wish, outcome, obstacle, plan** and differs from the GROW model in the focus it places on the **emotional engagement** of the participant. WOOP⁸ relies on the student expressing a very specific wish, on visualizing both the outcome and the obstacle and on designing a “when-then” plan (“when = specific time, then I will do Y”).

⁷ See Annex 1

⁸ Visit www.characterlab.org/woop for more information

As a whole-class activity, WOOP can help students better identify their resources because it asks for very specific details in the planning part. WOOP was created as a tool intended to bring about positive changes in one's behaviour and attitude, encouraging a growth mindset and including an accountability factor. If the **wish** is not fulfilled, students must understand that it is their **plan** they need to focus on and follow. Also, because it focuses on specific wishes and (ideally) lists specific habits to be adopted, it empowers students: it is their own actions that will create the positive outcome they wish for.

Ask students to WOOP, i.e. complete the table⁹ at the end of a study chapter or at the beginning of a school period (school term / semester). This activity is better suited for specific subjects, not necessarily for counselling classes, because it asks students to clearly identify their wishes in relation with a learning situation and it allows them to follow plans more easily and, at the same time, it provides them with accountability.

ENGAGE THE CLASS

It is very important for the teacher / counsellor to help students discover themselves. Although at a subconscious level students might be aware of their strengths, skills and values, it is very important to assist them in this journey of **self-discovery**. To begin with, **self-awareness** is a quality which allows students to make more realistic plans for the future, in line with their preferences and skills. To this end, the teacher / counsellor can organize whole-class activities enabling students to learn about themselves.

At the same time, such journeys of discovery can help disadvantaged students understand that there are opportunities for growth which they may not know about or which have been presented to them in an unfavourable light. For instance, most schools encourage students to become high-achievers, measuring their success in exam grades or subject grades. As a result, students' expectations (OECD, 2012) can be dictated by their own results which means low-performers may be encouraged to **expect less** from themselves and/or to disengage with school altogether¹⁰. This also leads to an underestimation of students' potential by their teachers.

In order to engage all students in their learning process and help them discover their

⁹ See Annex 2

¹⁰ See points 5) (page 5) and 2)(page 7) in this paper

potential, one activity that can be performed with the whole class is asking students to complete readily available questionnaires¹¹ which will reveal their strengths (VIA), their values (PVQ) and their interests (RIASEC). Based on the results of these questionnaires, the teacher / counsellor can choose to conduct individual guidance sessions with students who identify themselves as low-performers or who have unrealistic expectations from themselves.

Completing the questionnaires can be done in three successive counselling classes under the supervision of the teacher / counsellor. At the end of each questionnaire, students will make a record of their results which they can present to the teacher if/when asked. It is essential that students understand the importance of trying to provide honest answers and it is here that the teacher / counsellor must monitor as closely as possible how students approach the questionnaires.

EXPLORE WITH THE CLASS

Once students have completed their journey of self-discovery, they must now embark on an **exploration of opportunities**. The most accessible form for such an exploration is by keeping a **diary** with very specific chapters. In Annex 3 we have suggested a possible outline of these chapters with a short description for each, but teachers can adapt and adjust this tool to suit their class's needs and possibilities.

A chapter which students may find fun to develop is the "Network" chapter. Each of us is part of different networks based on our needs. Students must be made aware of the diversity of personal connections they have already made and, by describing them in their diary, turn these connections into supporting networks. The Personal Network is made up of all very close friends and family members who the student knows he or she can trust to help them with personal matters. Some students may choose to list here their best friends or their grandparents or an aunt/uncle, depending on the type of relationship they have with their family and circle of friends. The teacher / counsellor should not expect students to list here parents first, especially teenagers, considering that this is also the age when parents can be perceived as too possessive or narrow-minded.

¹¹ <https://calling.lmsformazione.it/>

The Educational Network can include names which are different from the names listed with the Social Network, simply because the latter includes people from outside the school environment. At this point, teachers / counsellors should explain students that they must explain in writing / describe why they have included a name in one of the lists or other. For instance, a complete entry could read *“John Smith, because he helps me with my Physics homework every time I ask him.”*

In addition to asking students keep a diary, teachers may want to periodically ask students to fill in quick **diagnostic surveys**. Annex 4 contains suggested questions which can be included in a Google Form. The results to these surveys can help teachers identify students who struggle or are disengaged with school and, consequently, decide on a course of action for these students in particular. As a whole-class activity, completing such quick diagnostic surveys can create an atmosphere of openness and trust between teachers and students, promoting collaboration and empathy. Furthermore, this tool can help teachers regulate their teaching and adapt to the needs of the whole class.

Individual counselling activities

EXPERIENCE

Teachers / Counsellor should initiate individual discussions, particularly with at-risk students based on their completion of the previously suggested activities. With students engaged in their journey of self-discovery and self-assessment by means of completing their **diary**, the teacher has sufficient information and a good base to initiate one-on-one discussions with a student in order to help him or her better understand what their future path might be. In the **Experience** stage, students actively contribute entries to their diary and use these as a basis for their guidance sessions with their teacher. In turn, the teacher can refer to the student's entries and comments, helping him or her find solutions, make commitments and account for their progress. It is essential at this stage that the teacher **resists making judgments** or **providing solutions**. It is the student that needs to be guided towards finding an answer themselves, which means the teacher must be able to ask open-ended questions based on their actively listening to the student's feedback.

At this stage it is up to the teacher to decide on how to plan the individual counselling



session, how much time they can allocate for each student and how they can keep track of each student's progress. We must point out that the vital element here is **accountability**. Each student must decide on individual and very specific accountability measures; for instance, *'If I do not complete the planned action step, I will extend the timeframe allocated by one month.'* The teacher must be ready to help the student reframe his or her plan and design realistic expectations, but again must resist the temptation to provide the students with ready-made adjustments.

Conclusion

All students must be encouraged to complete such journeys of self-discovery. Once they become aware of their own skills, qualities and interests, students will be better equipped to take decisions about their future career (professional or academic). Their decision will be reinforced by their self-awareness and will be anchored in the reality of their own potential. Furthermore, having completed the steps outlined above, students will have a more positive outlook towards their choices and will be able to deal more effectively with whatever obstacles they face.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 – GROW

Ask students to fill in the following table. They must try to provide **honest answers**; insist that the more honest the answer, the faster (and better) they will find a solution.

Students should keep this worksheet in their **personal diary** and consult it periodically, checking on how successful their description of the **way forward** is.

It is recommendable that periodically, **after** students have completed the GROW worksheet(s), teachers should invite students individually to show them their GROW worksheets and openly discuss with them on the effectiveness of their solutions and on how close or far they are from their set goal.

GOAL	<i>What is your goal? What do you want to achieve? Be very specific</i>
REALITY	<i>What is the reality? How far are you from your goal? (describe the situation as objectively as possible; no one will judge you). Write 2 – 3 sentences.</i>
OBSTACLE	<i>What are the interior obstacles preventing you from reaching the goal? Write 2 – 3 sentences about yourself (e.g. I am (not) ... / I do (not) ...)</i>
OPTION	<i>What can you do to deal with your inner obstacles? List as many options as you want; it will give you a wider choice of actions that can help you.</i>
WAY FORWARD	<i>What 2 action steps will you take to clear the obstacles and reach your goal?</i>

Annex 2 – WOOP¹²

W	WISH What is one specific wish that you want to accomplish in relation to _____ (school subject)	<u>My wish is:</u> <i>for example: 'My wish is to get the maximum grade in the next Math test paper.'</i>
O	OUTCOME If you accomplish your wish, how will you feel? What will the best outcome be? Pause and really imagine the outcome	<u>I will feel / The best outcome is:</u> <i>for example: 'I will feel proud of myself.' or 'My parents will appreciate my efforts.'</i>
O	OBSTACLE What is the main obstacle inside you that might prevent you from accomplishing your wish? Be honest. Pause and really imagine the obstacle	<u>My obstacle is:</u> <i>for example: 'I procrastinate studying.' or 'I prefer spending time on social media to working at Math.'</i>
P	PLAN What is an effective, real action you can take to deal with the obstacle? Make a 'when – then' plan.	<u>When (what time):</u> <i>for example: 'every day, from 2pm to 2:30pm'</i> <u>Then I will:</u> <i>for example: 'solve 4 exercises from the textbook'</i>

¹² Adapted from <https://characterlab.org/activities/woop-for-classrooms/>

Annex 3 – Diary

Chapter I Who are you? *... for each open-ended question students must provide an expected result, consequence or action they plan to take while also specifying a reasonable / realistic time-limit.	Student's presentation: Name – Age / School – Class Your strengths (VIA) are: Your values (PVQ) are: Your interests (RIASEC) are: * What are your plans and wishes for the near-future? * What are your family's plans and wishes for you? * What would you like to change about yourself? * What are your assets / skills? * What are you passionate about? * ...
Chapter II Who do you rely on? NETWORKS	What networks do you have in place? - Personal network (e.g. who are your closest friends / family members, people you trust to help you on personal matters?) - Social network (e.g. who are your friends or acquaintances you are on speaking terms with and who can supply you with information when you need it?) - Educational network (e.g. who are the colleagues and/or teachers you can rely on to help you with your schoolwork or your studies?) - Recreational network (e.g. who are your friends or acquaintances with whom you enjoy having fun with and with whom you engage in spare time activities / hobbies / pursuits?) - Professional network (e.g. who are your friends or acquaintances who can help you grow professionally or who can clarify aspects which are work related?)



Chapter III Action steps What steps do you plan to help you grow? What is the timeline set for these steps? How do you plan to stay motivated?	- GROW worksheets - WOOP worksheets <u>Accountability measures – Stay motivated</u> <i>What motivates you?</i> <i>What rewards work best for you / do you expect?</i> <i>What changes will you make to ensure you will reach your goals?</i> <i>How do you plan to stay in charge and focus on your goals?</i>
Chapter IV What are your resources?	List here the places / websites / resources you (can) use to help you find answers or solutions to your questions. <i>Where can you find out more about future schooling opportunities?</i> <i>Are there financial obligations to meet? If so, which and how can you answer them?</i> <i>What scholarships or grants are available in your area for people of your age?</i> <i>What online courses can you attend to help you understand more on a specific subject?</i> <i>Are you available for full-time or part-time commitment to additional schoolwork / optional courses? Why (not)?</i> <i>Who – from your list of Networks – can give you guidance or provide you with answers related to your future career / path? When do you plan to ask them for help?</i>
Chapter V What are your successes?	<u>Celebrate!</u> List here all the small changes you made which enabled you to reach your goals. You can make this in the form of a checklist, celebrating every small victory in your journey to success.

Annex 4 – Quick diagnostic survey

Copy-paste these questions in a Google Form and give it a **fun title** (e.g. “How are you today?”).

Ask your students to access the link and answer the questions. Expected completion time: 5 min.

1. Today I feel (*a score of 3 means neutral*)

Awful 1 2 3 4 5 Great

2. Why are you feeling this way? (optional)

3. Usually at school I feel (*a score of 3 means neutral*)

Awful 1 2 3 4 5 Great

4. What types of activities do you enjoy at school? (*Choose multiple options / all that apply*)

small group activities

whole group activities

independent time

lunch

getting outdoors

sports

one-on-one time with teachers

other (please specify)

5. What can your teacher do to better support you? (*Choose multiple options / all that apply*)

Check in on my emotional well-being

Provide mental health resources

Address my concerns about the workload

Encourage more peer collaboration (group projects/discussions)

Provide academic guidance

Make more space for questions and discussions

Provide clearer instructions / explanations

6. What ideas do you have for ways to feel more supported by and connected to your teachers and classmates? (name any activities you want your teacher to try)

7. I wish my teachers knew ... (*What do you want to tell your teachers?*)



8. Do you need support today?

Yes

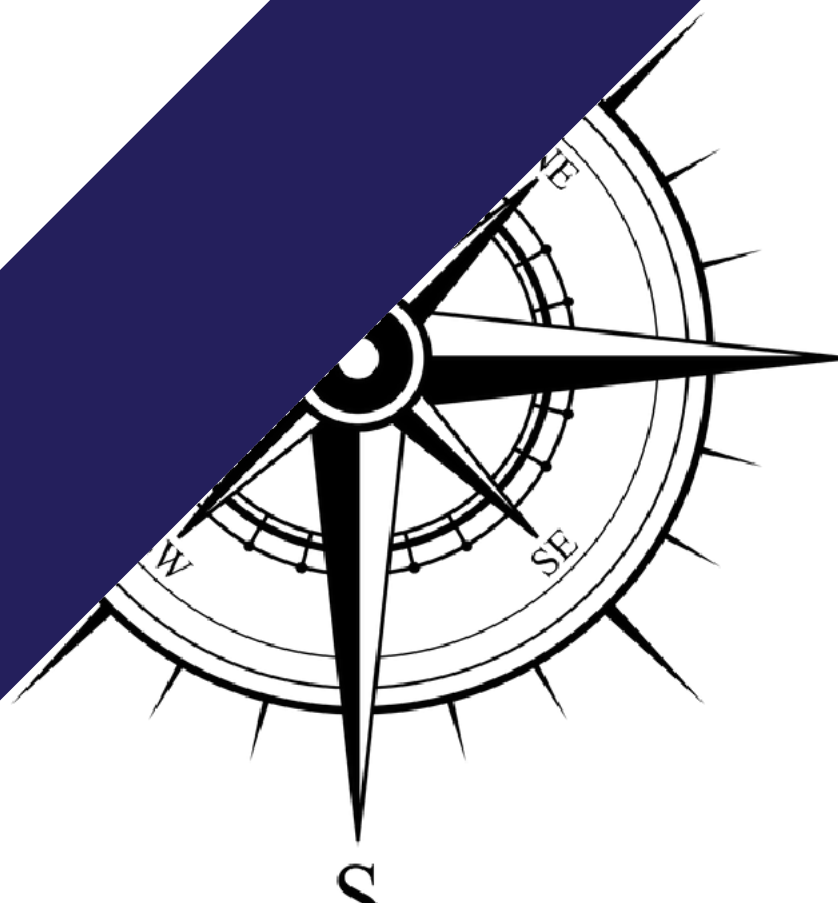
No

9. Is there anything else you want to share with me? Concerns, questions, comments, wonderings?

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**Vulnerable students at 53rd
Lyceum of Athens, Greece**
A brief analysis



1. Introduction

This paper aims to present the characteristics of one of the vulnerable groups of students of the 53rd Lyceum of Athens and to link this vulnerability to the students' career guidance counselling. Firstly, the identity of one of the most important categories of vulnerability, that of students facing severe financial difficulties, will be presented. Subsequently, it will be analyzed how this negatively affects students' future careers. Good practices for the inclusion of this group of students will then be proposed with regard to their career guidance. Finally, conclusions will be drawn on the importance of successful career guidance counselling for the vulnerable social group of students facing financial difficulties.

2. Vulnerability: Students living in very low-income families

One of the basic characteristics of the social identity of the families of the students of the 53rd Lyceum of Athens is that the majority of them belong to the low-income social class. This means that many students have grown up in a deprived economic environment which has a decisive impact on their educational and, more broadly, on their cultural profile.

More specifically, these pupils are in a family environment in which the parents have very low incomes, either because they are employed in low-paid jobs or because they are affected by unemployment or underemployment (part-time, seasonal employment, etc.).

Thus, students and their families are part of this vulnerable social group that suffers social and educational inequalities with great intensity (Kyridis, Tourtouras, & Thanos, 2017). Indeed, it is indicative that social mobility for these families is very limited. Students, usually, continue to live in the same social environment as their parents even after graduating from school, so that they



cannot decisively improve their living standards or achieve a social change that would alter their living conditions (Saragatsi, et. al, 2024).

It is worth noting that the above students have mostly immigrant or refugee backgrounds, but there are also several non-migrant families belonging to the same social group. This is also due to the fact that, according to Greek legislation, each school is required to be attended almost exclusively by pupils living in the district where each school is located. In other words, the right to choose a public school in Greek General Education is not given. The district in question, Sepolia, has a population of mainly low-income/very low-income class families (workers, craftsmen, employees, semi-employed and unemployed). Therefore, the image of the students is representative of the social reality of this particular district of Athens.

3. The negative impact of financial difficulties on students' vocational orientation

Social research has shown that the financial problems faced by students have a negative impact not only on the enrichment of their cultural capital but also on the choices they make in their adult lives about their future working life (Kyridis, Tourtouras, & Thanos, 2017). Students who grow up in an environment of economic deprivation, uncertainty and volatility are variously vulnerable to economic instability, financial crises and social marginalization (Saragatsi, et. al, 2024).

It is no coincidence, therefore, that it is predominantly these students who face the dilemma of career orientation: one choice is long-term university studies that will potentially lead them in the long run to better paid work, economic security and social change, i.e. social advancement and social class change (Saragatsi, et. al, 2023), and their other option is a fast entry into the labour market, as early as 17-18 years old, with poor formal qualifications, in low-paid



jobs with no job security guarantees and, usually, in semi-employment or seasonal employment.

For the most part, we observe that students of lower economic classes are forced to turn to the second option, i.e. to enter the labour market hastily in order to earn some personal income to contribute to the poor family budget. Even if these students have entered university at a very high financial cost to the family, through examinations, it is very common for them to work in parallel, even in day jobs.

Thus, research shows that the social position of students from low-income families has a decisive influence on their career orientation and, to a large extent, prescribes their career choices (Saragatsi, et. al, 2024). The same applies to the career choices of the students in our school in relation to the social position of the family and its economic and cultural capital. Most of the students in this social group seek fast income in low-paid jobs (workers, craftsmen, employees in the catering sector or in local private enterprises, seasonal employees in tourism, semi-employed).

4. Good inclusion practices for career guidance for school students from low-income families.

In order to be able to enrich the career guidance of students belonging to the vulnerable social group described above, we will need to apply some good practices that are both realistic and appropriate for the specific school and social environment. Obviously, schools cannot provide solutions that will solve the financial problem of families, but they can provide services that will alleviate some of the financial burden in the education sector and act as a compensatory policy.

First of all, free career guidance counselling is essential during the school year. The school will establish the institution of "Career Guidance Days" during





which students, especially from vulnerable groups, will be able to have free personal career guidance sessions with trained teachers. The emphasis is on the free provision of services as in Greece families usually turn to companies that provide paid counselling services, which puts a strain on the family's finances. In particular, the good practices applied in the Erasmus+ My Compass programme will be used.

In addition, emphasis will be placed on learning support for vulnerable pupils with free lessons in the evening hours. Already in the Municipality of Athens, the institution of the Social Care Centre for families is operating for pupils of low-income families that cannot afford the burden of private lessons to enhance the learning performance of their children. In the Social Care Centre, pupils attend free lessons in the afternoons by volunteer teachers in order to review the school curriculum.

The school could therefore provide, twice a week, additional afternoon supplementary teaching classes to children with a learning profile such as the one we describe. This action would compensate for the disadvantage faced by this group and would be one means of bridging educational inequalities, because pupils would boost their performance and have better prospects of succeeding in the examinations leading to universities.

In addition, emphasis will be placed on the enrichment of students' cultural capital according to the social theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The latter had observed that a distinctive difference between the working class and the upper class in the field of education is that students of the former come to school with a cultural capital that is not directly related to what is projected and required by the school (Bourdieu, 1973). This is a fundamental cause of these students' failure at school, through no fault of their own.

53rd Lyceum of Athens already implements policies to enhance the cultural capital of all students in accordance with the requirements of the formal





educational policy. This means that year-long educational programmes and targeted actions are organised in the fields of culture, environmental awareness, Erasmus+, career guidance, volunteering, active citizenship, etc.

The emphasis will be on persuading families and students of this particular social group to participate in as many of these free activities as possible in order to enrich their cultural capital and thus not be disadvantaged in this area compared to other students (Bourdieu, 1973). If this is achieved, it will bridge the gap that forces them to start from a very different level in terms of their professional orientation and will give them the motivation and confidence to strengthen their own identity, to improve their standard of living and make more successful career choices.

Another strategy to enhance students' career guidance has to do with student-teacher relations. Social education research shows that students from vulnerable social groups are motivated to participate in career guidance activities at school and to trust teachers when the relationships between them are characterized by mutual trust, support, respect and honesty (Schmid, Jørstad, & Stokke Nordlie, 2021). Creating an educational climate that empowers students from vulnerable groups and provides them with equal opportunities for learning and career guidance is key for these students to set goals that match what they want to do in life rather than what they are forced to do due to economic hardship (Cummins, 2005).

5. Conclusions

This study, carried out to identify the characteristics of the vulnerable group of economically disadvantaged students, the impact of vulnerability on their orientation and to propose policies to empower them, interesting conclusions came out regarding the implementation of the Erasmus+ My Compass programme





at the 53rd Lyceum of Athens.

First of all, it was found that the vulnerable social group pupils of low-income families is clearly disadvantaged in terms of its orientation and professional choices compared to other pupil groups. The reason is that economic hardship has a negative impact on students' career and academic choices. This can be mediated to some extent by making use of the Erasmus+ My Compass project. This programme offers tools to focus on students' multiple identities and skills and provide career choices that fit them.

In addition, suggestions were made to implement good practices to support students and their families fitting the profile in order to relieve some of the financial burdens related to education. Emphasis is placed on the free provision of supplementary teaching lessons and career guidance and the enrichment of pupils' cultural capital to enable them to meet the demands of formal education and the demands of a successful career.

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Thank You

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REPORT ON VULNERABILITIES IN I.O. ORTE: IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN STUDENTS

Report on the Challenges Faced by Foreign Students in the Italian School System with focus on I.O. ORTE, and Psychological and Educational Techniques Used to Overcome These Challenges and to Promote Integration into the Workforce.

A brief overview of immigration and the Italian approach to foreign students

Migration is a phenomenon that fundamentally characterizes the era we live in, and today more than ever, with the constant increase in the flow of people crossing national borders, there is a need to rely on accurate data and numbers to avoid distorting reality or, worse, creating climates of strong hostility towards foreigners.

For more than twenty years, Italy has been grappling with the phenomenon of international migration, but it is especially in the past two years that our peninsula has become, among European countries, the primary landing spot for many people fleeing war, persecution, and famine. [1]

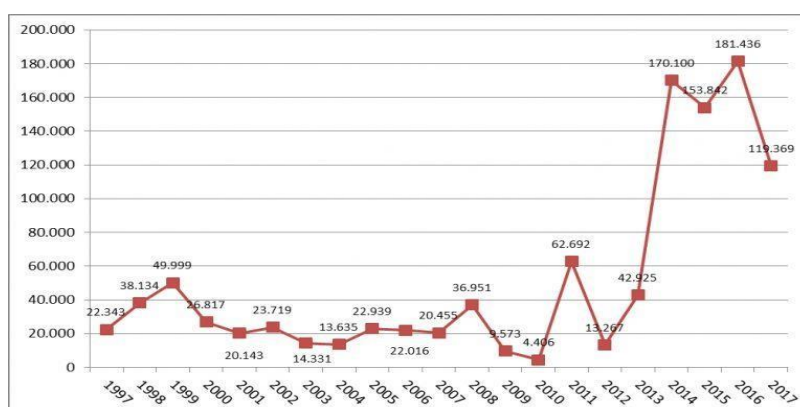


Figure 1: Migrants landed on Italian shores, from 1997 to 2017.

During the 1990s, the landings of migrants, especially Albanians and Kosovars, reached peaks of 50,000 people (in 1999), but it was particularly in the 2000s that arrivals on Italian shores became a continuous and constant flow, averaging 23,000 people per year.



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The following years, from 2008 to 2013, were the most unstable: 2011 and 2013 saw the highest landings, with 63,000 people in 2011 and 43,000 in 2013, both years marked by significant historical events in North Africa and the Near Middle East. From 2014 to 2017, a new phase of migratory flows opened, and Italy came to receive over 600,000 migrants (170,000 in 2014, 153,000 in 2015, 181,000 in 2016, and 120,000 in 2017), more than were received in the previous twenty years. [1]

In recent years, European countries, including Italy, have adopted a strategy to extend compulsory education as much as possible, aiming to provide students with a longer and more enriching educational experience. This approach seeks to elevate educational levels and ensure that the investment in education translates into valuable skills for the job market.

Despite these efforts, the rate of early school dropouts remains high, especially among foreign students who struggle with integration. These students often face challenges such as language barriers, social isolation, and general difficulties in adapting to the educational system.

As of August 31, 2021, data from the Italian Ministry of Education shows that 9.7% of the school population is of foreign origin. Italian schools overall have 8,664,000 students, with approximately 842,000 of them being of non-Italian origin. Among these 842,000 students, 63.1% were born in Italy. The majority of foreign students in Italian schools are second-generation immigrants, children born in Italy from foreign parents.

This shift indicates that we have moved from implementing intercultural initiatives for first-generation migrants to establishing an intercultural system that embraces second-generation immigrant children, whose parents themselves have experienced the Italian educational system. Foreign students often encounter significant challenges when adapting to the Italian school system. These difficulties can arise from language barriers, cultural differences, and varied educational backgrounds. This report outlines the primary challenges faced by these students and the psychological and educational techniques employed to help them overcome these obstacles and integrate into the workforce. [1]



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Challenges Faced by Foreign Students: a Literature Review

Cultural Differences: The first and most common challenge international students encounter in their study countries is sociocultural. These challenges have been linked to increased stress levels among international students [2] especially in the first and second years of arrival in their host country.[3]. Homesickness, loneliness, and isolation[4], stress [5], absence of cultural food [6], social living conditions, climate and environmental differences unequal treatment, and language discrimination [7] are some common sociocultural challenges international students face. Meanwhile, these challenges are different for domestic students. Compared to their international counterparts, domestic students can quickly adapt to higher education since they usually have a support system. Whereas international students live in a foreign land with different cultures, have little knowledge of the way of life, and barely know people in the new destination.

Language Barriers: One of the most significant challenges is the language barrier. Infact, many immigrant-origin students do not possess adequate knowledge of the Italian language, have limited familiarity with the education system, have difficulties in interacting with teachers and peers, and experience problems related to prejudice and discrimination. The Ministry of Education has tried to address the challenge posed by foreign students by promoting intercultural education in schools. However, the results achieved so far have not always been satisfactory. One factor responsible for this has been the speed with which the immigrant school population has grown in a rather short time. School managers and teachers have therefore been taken by surprise by the arrival of the new challenges brought by this population. In addition, most school staff had to deal with foreign students without being adequately trained and qualified. Empirical evidence has however shown that many effective good practices have flourished thanks to the personal initiative of a number of teachers sensitive to the school and social integration of foreign students. The the main limitation of these good practices, however, is that it is difficult to export them to other schools. One of the main challenges facing students of immigrant origin is undoubtedly the acquisition of Italian as a second language (L2). The acquisition of Italian as L2 is also one - though not the only one - of the main factors responsible for the low academic performance of immigrant-origin students. [8]

Educational Backgrounds: Variations in prior educational experiences can result in gaps in knowledge or different levels of academic preparedness, making it difficult for students to keep up with the curriculum. [9] International students struggle more during their first year as they get to know their new learning environment.



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This is also when the realization of a new life dawns on them. As a result, being in a new country and navigating a new school system increases alienation thoughts among international students. [10]

In particular, students studying in non-English-speaking countries have more language difficulties. A study on non-English speaking international students [11] in their first year at a Russian university showed that studying in a non-English-speaking country is even more tedious, and students must devote their first year to learning Russian. This phenomenon is common in most European universities, where students must learn the host nation's language to qualify for tuition-free education. The implication is that these students must learn a new language from scratch to a certain proficiency level within a limited time before starting their academic journey.

Social Integration: Integrating into a new social environment can be challenging. Although international students can predict sociocultural challenges such as language and loneliness, they may still face unexpected challenges such as discrimination, racism, and culture shock. For instance, a study [12] investigated racial discrimination against international students, and respondents reported that they had experienced racially motivated verbal and physical assault. Likewise, Ge et al. (2019) found cultural bias and discrimination against Chinese international students in Canada. These students reported being prejudiced based on their identity (language use, skin color, and cultural practices). Such negative labels hinder students' adaptation and academic success in the long run [13]. One apparent solution to this issue would be enabling a social relationship between domestic and international students. However, international students find it difficult to form friendships with domestic students in their host countries [14] since they mostly gravitate toward their fellow international students of the same ethnicity.

A very recent paper (2022) has connected the mentioned challenges through a study on the Educational Problems of Immigrant Students conducted on 20 immigrant students and 15 educators. The data, obtained as a result of the interviews with the participants, have shown that the theme of Academic Problems Experienced by Migrant Children was mainly concentrated in two different categories. These are language related problems and problems related to course success. Findings related to the problems experienced in these categories are given in **Table 1**. [15]



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Table 1 Academic Problems of Migrant Children

Categories	Student	Educator	Total
Problem Related to Language			
Having problems because they cannot understand Turkish properly	17	15	32
Inability to understand the question asked	13	6	19
Inability to communicate with teachers and friends	9	5	14
Friends laughing because they can't pronounce words	7	4	13
Afraid of taking the floor and saying the wrong thing in the lesson	6	4	10
Lack of academic support due to the family not knowing the language	3	3	6
Lack of support from friends due to language barrier	3	2	5
Not wanting to take a lesson they can't understand	2	2	4
Not wanting to go to school because of not knowing Turkish	3	0	3
Problems Related to Course Success			
Inability to ask questions that are not understood because of being afraid	17	10	27
Inability to express oneself	14	4	18
Having time problems in the questions asked	6	4	10
Having trouble reading and writing	4	5	9
Being evaluated under the same conditions as other students	5	3	8
Teachers not paying enough attention	5	1	6
Being alienated from school due to poor performance	3	2	5
Home environment being distant from school culture	0	3	3
Not having a target and ideal	0	2	2
Learning slowly relative to the class	0	2	2
Not able to find an empty seat in the school bus due to being immigrants	1	0	1

*n student = 20, n educator = 15

This study points out the importance to investigate the educational problems that immigrant children experience, because elimination of them may contribute to an easier integration of these children into society. Indeed, children whose educational problems have been resolved and brought to school will live next to their teachers, they are protected from the negativities, illegality and early school leaving.

Psychological and Educational Techniques for Overcoming Challenges

On the basis of the challenges discussed in the previous paragraph, the recent researchers are focusing the interest in international students' mental health because of the psychological, physical, and mental stress associated with migration.



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According to Dovchin (2020), language discrimination leads to an inferiority complex, social withdrawal, anxiety, and self-esteem issues for international students.

In order to help foreign children in their integration process both in the Italian social context and in the Italian school, a number of strategies [16], [17] can be implemented, for example:

1. **Language Support Programs:** Schools implement language support programs, such as Italian as a Second Language (ISL) classes, to help students improve their language skills. These programs often include additional tutoring and language workshops.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Educators receive training on cultural sensitivity to better understand and support the diverse backgrounds of their students. This training helps create an inclusive and respectful classroom environment.
3. **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):** Schools develop IEPs tailored to the specific needs of foreign students. These plans may include personalized learning goals, additional resources, and modified teaching methods to address individual learning gaps.
4. **Psychological Counseling Services:** Schools provide access to psychological counseling to help students cope with the emotional and psychological challenges of adapting to a new environment. Counselors work with students to build resilience and develop coping strategies.
5. **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Pairing foreign students with local peers through mentorship programs can facilitate social integration. Mentors offer guidance, support, and friendship, helping newcomers feel more connected and less isolated.
6. **Extracurricular Activities:** Encouraging participation in extracurricular activities allows foreign students to engage with their peers outside the classroom, fostering social bonds and a sense of belonging.
7. **Career Counseling and Work Integration Programs:** Schools collaborate with local businesses and organizations to offer career counseling and job placement programs. These initiatives help foreign students gain work experience, understand the job market, and develop skills necessary for successful integration into the workforce.



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HOSTING PROTOCOL

On the basis of the Italian guidelines for the school integration of foreign children issued by the Ministry of Education, the school has drawn up a reception protocol which contains guidelines to promote the integration of foreign students whose sections are schematized in **Figure 2**.

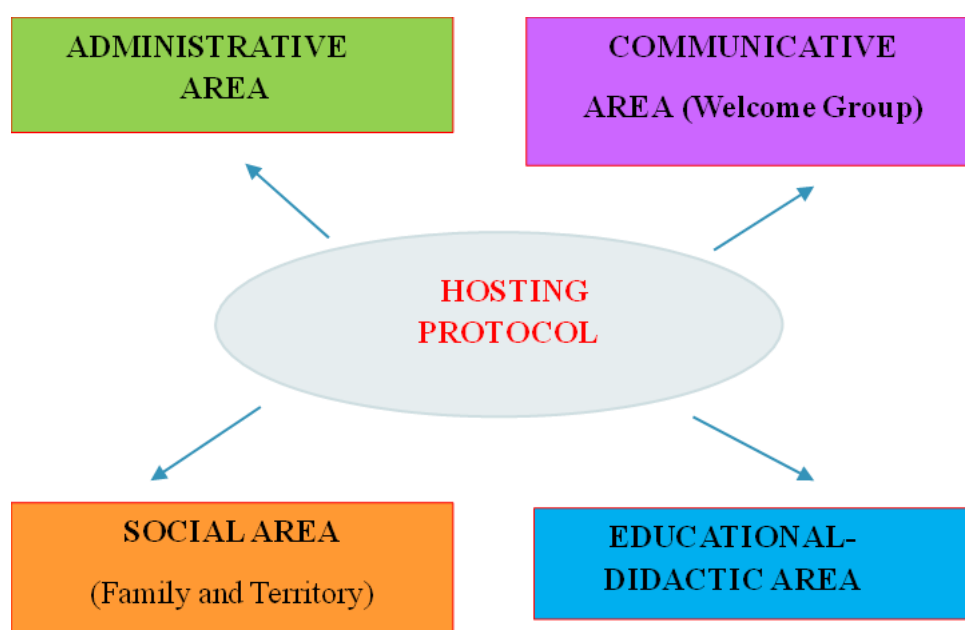


Figure 2. Schematic representation for the Hosting Protocol sections in the I.O. of Orte.

The details of the four sections are reported below:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

- ENROLLMENT AND DOCUMENTATION (Tasks of the Secretariat)

This step represents the first stage of welcoming the foreign student and their family and is managed by the Secretariat Office.



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The enrollment process for foreign students is handled by the Head of the Didactic Area, who is responsible for facilitating the necessary procedures for the families. It is specified that enrollment can be requested at any time during the school year and that students in an irregular situation are enrolled pending regularization.

The Secretariat will maintain a dedicated list of foreign students and update it based on new enrollments, along with other useful information.

Tasks of the Secretariat:

- Enroll the student using the school's forms, bilingual if necessary.
- Acquire self-certification of personal data;
 - Obtain the certificate confirming the class or school attended in the country of origin, translated and validated by the Italian Consulate in the country of origin;
- Gather information regarding the student's previous educational path;
- Obtain health documents certifying completed vaccinations (translated into Italian).
- Obtain the option to attend or not attend Catholic religious instruction;
- Provide families with initial information about the school's organizational structure.
- Notify the School Principal for an initial contact with the school;
 - Convene the Welcome Group for the next phase (initial introduction) and transmit the collected material to the committee;
 - Notify the Head of the school order and the assigned school site for the student's welcome;

Documentation:

- Personal documents;
- Health documents;
- School documents.



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2. COMMUNICATIVE - RELATIONAL AREA

INITIAL INTRODUCTION (Tasks of the Welcome Group)

In this phase, the school creates an environment of meeting and exchange, pays attention to the needs of the student, and gathers information about the student's personal and educational background, family situation, interests, skills, and competencies.

This phase is managed by the Welcome Group, which consists of:

- The School Principal or a collaborator;
- The Teacher Responsible for Intercultural Affairs;
- Three teachers: one for Italian, one for mathematics, and one for a foreign language;
- A teacher from the proposed section or class for placement.

The members of the Welcome Group are appointed by the School Board.

Tasks of the Welcome Group:

- Meet with the student and their family;
- Gather information about the linguistic biography and educational background of students;
- Provide additional information to the family about the school's organization;
- Inform the family about the criteria for class placement adopted by the school;
- Establish a collaborative relationship with the family;
- Conduct an interview with the student using non-verbal techniques;
- Assess the skills and competencies possessed by the student;
- Write a report on the findings.

After the interview, teachers assess skills and competencies using prepared forms.

For students enrolled before the start of the school year, the group meets in September after calling in the parents and students.



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Materials:

- School handbook;
- Forms for assessing linguistic and mathematical skills;
- Sample report template.

3. EDUCATIONAL-DIDACTIC AREA**CLASS ASSIGNMENT (Criteria for Class Assignment)**

School Organization: Types of Interventions for Italian Language Instruction; Necessary Resources for Such Interventions; Evaluation of Foreign Students; Intercultural Education
The Reception Group proposes the placement in the class to the School Principal, who determines the assignment, taking into account:

- the criteria approved by the Teaching Staff Council;
- the situation of the hypothetical reception class;
- the documentation received by the Secretariat Office;
- the data collected during the meeting with the family and the student;
- the results from the assessment of competency levels.

Materials:

- Information sheets of the educational systems of the countries of origin;
- Sheet used in the interview;
- Sheets for the assessment of linguistic and mathematical skills.

Annex I: criteria for class assignment

In the placement of foreign students into classes, the correspondence between the class and the student's age is prioritized; based on prudently evaluated information regarding previous schooling and the educational system of the country of origin, information provided by the family, and verified skills and competencies, placement in a lower or higher level class may be arranged, depending on the potential benefits.



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The number of students with non-Italian citizenship in each class shall generally not exceed 30% of the total enrolled students (Circular Letter No. 2 of 08/01/10);

The reception group considers the composition of the class in terms of the number of students (priority is given to classes or sections with fewer students), the presence of other foreign students, and the characteristics of the group regarding the complexity of situations;

Newly arrived students belonging to the same linguistic group are placed in small groups not exceeding 3 or 4 to facilitate mutual assistance in communication and limit the perception of uprooting and loss of identity;

In some cases, a 30-day observation period in the class corresponding to the student's age is foreseen, at the end of which the reception group, in agreement with the class teachers, will evaluate the confirmation of enrollment in the aforementioned class or a lower class.

The class coordinator receives information from the welcome group, specifically:

- The report on the initial assessment, particularly regarding linguistic and mathematical skills.
- A copy of the student's educational qualifications and/or the courses taken in their country of origin, including, where possible, the subjects studied and corresponding grades.

The class coordinator informs the Class Council about the new placement. The on-duty teacher welcomes the new student and introduces them to the class.

The class teachers:

- Jointly facilitate the student's integration into the class, fostering relationships with adults and peers, including identifying student-tutors of the same nationality or Italian;
- Identify specific learning needs and develop a personalized educational plan to achieve the minimum objectives outlined in the curriculum;
- Formulate an individualized path that may temporarily exclude certain subjects to allow attendance of literacy or language consolidation activities during school hours (C.M. No. 2 of 08/01/10);
- Maintain contact with the Italian language teacher;
- Identify methods for simplifying or facilitating language use in each subject;



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- Systematically reinforce the use of Italian by involving the student in class activities.

Annex II: School Organization

Organization of Italian as a Second Language (L2) Study

Based on available resources, the school prepares the following interventions: Activation of intensive Italian L2 courses, literacy and enhancement modules, structured for groups of students in 2-hour sessions, drawing on internal professional and economic resources (hours exceeding the teaching schedule);

Activation of targeted interventions for the consolidation of the Italian language or as support for subject learning (support teacher hours or teachers with available hours); Activation of literacy and educational support courses using external professional resources available in the area (volunteer associations and local entities).

Teachers organizing the literacy courses use:

- Entry test sheets;
- Sheets with instructions for teaching Italian language courses (intensive literacy and enhancement courses);
- Specific texts for learning the Italian language available at the school; Simplified texts for subject support available at the school.

Intercultural Education

The school organizes activities that promote daily dialogue, communication, understanding, and collaboration, aiming for mutual enrichment.

These activities are carried out within the curricular and laboratory framework, integrating the theme of citizenship with interculturalism according to paths and methods suitable for the various school realities and orders, and with the human and financial resources available.



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Evaluation

The evaluation of foreign students, particularly those who can be defined as newly arrived, presents various issues, from evaluation methods to certification, and the need to consider the individual learning path.

In this context, the need to prioritize formative evaluation over "certifying" evaluation is emphasized, taking into account the student's path, the progress made, motivation, and commitment. Since the difficulties encountered are mainly linguistic, it is necessary to evaluate abilities regardless of these difficulties. When evaluating learning, some aspects related to the native language that may have specific consequences, such as spelling errors, should be gradually corrected; therefore, in written production, the content should be considered rather than the form.

In particular, when deciding on the transition from one class to another or from one educational level to the next, a variety of elements should be considered. Therefore, for mid-year evaluation, it is decided to:

Provide an evaluation that takes into account the arrival date of the student and the information collected, their abilities, the path taken, commitment, and academic knowledge. Specifically, if sufficient linguistic proficiency has not yet been reached to handle learning even simplified content, an evaluation with motivation is given: the evaluation refers to the learning path undertaken since the student is in the initial phase of Italian language literacy.

The work done by students in literacy courses becomes an integral part of the Italian evaluation; Prioritize the practical aspect of certain subjects such as physical education and the arts.

For the end-of-year evaluation, it is decided to provide an evaluation in all subjects. For the middle school diploma exams, it is decided to:

- Propose "stepped" written exam tests that identify various levels for foreign languages and mathematics;
- Propose written exam tests with "broad" content for Italian so that each student can find the most appropriate way to demonstrate their competencies;
- Evaluate according to the established regulations for exams and the State exam at the end of the first cycle of education based on the indications provided at the end of the year for carrying out all written tests and the multidisciplinary interview.



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4. SOCIAL- RELATIONSHIP AND COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY AND

FAMILIES (Tasks of the Integration Support Staff, of the Cultural Mediator and Memorandum of Understanding with Cultural and Volunteer Associations, the Municipality, and Parents)

Relationships with the families of foreign students are fundamental to developing an effective integration project; therefore, they must be clear, collaborative, and consistent. To facilitate communication, the following measures are put in place:

- Distribution of bilingual informational material for school-family communications;
- Regular contact between the school and the family throughout the year;
- Activation of a consultancy service by the Municipality;
- Participation of parents in the School Integration Group;
- Participation in adult courses organized by local volunteer associations.

COLLABORATION WITH THE TERRITORY

The integration process of foreign students is not limited to welcoming them, teaching the new language, and communicating with parents; it is also necessary to promote the relationship with the territory for the implementation of an integrated project. Participatory planning aims to improve a situation through understanding and is based on the active involvement of everyone, drawing on their proposals, ideas, desires, and needs.

Therefore, the school:

- Identifies the Intercultural Function Representative;
- Establishes a School Integration Group;
- Activates, based on available resources, a Listening Desk for parents of all school levels with a cultural mediator to identify difficulties, provide information, support, guide, and welcome proposals and suggestions;
- Promotes meetings with parents, Municipality representatives, and local volunteer and cultural associations to facilitate information sharing with the school, planning, and evaluation;



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- Informs and collaborates on the activation of homework help and extracurricular laboratory activities by the Municipality and social promotion associations;
- Designs forms of integration with volunteer associations: adult training courses, literacy courses, and educational support for foreign students;
- Requests the Municipality to provide free services for students in economic difficulty or other forms of support;
- Participates in intercultural initiatives proposed by local authorities, cultural and volunteer associations present in the territory.

Attachment III

To achieve the project's integration, in alignment with the themes that have always defined the PTOF of the Omnicomprehensive Institute of Orte: competence, citizenship, and diversity, various figures and working groups with different functions are identified and established at multiple levels:

Instrumental Function for the area concerning integration with the aim of promoting the integration of foreign students; integration at various levels: school, community, families.

School Integration Group composed of:

- School Principal;
- Intercultural Instrumental Function
- Heads of school buildings
- Local authority representative
- Representatives of Italian and foreign parents
- ATA representative
- Representatives of cultural and volunteer associations
- Representatives of Italian and foreign students to design and verify the integration process.

Intercultural Commission composed of:

- Intercultural Instrumental Function;
- School level representatives: Kindergarten, Primary, Lower Secondary, and Upper Secondary;
- Whose functions will be determined according to needs, year by year.



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Welcome Group:

whose tasks and members have already been listed in the section regarding the initial acquaintance.

Volunteer and cultural associations present in the area:

- for informational activities regarding what has been prepared by the Institute;
- for mediation activities with families;
- to translate informational materials;
- to participate in the integration group;
- to organize literacy and Italian culture courses for adults;
- to organize intercultural education activities and academic support for students.

Cultural mediator identified according to needs and resources, who is required to:

- Conduct relationship activities through the activation of a listening desk for parents and students, in a manner compatible with the needs of the interested parties, the school, and the parents, to identify difficulties, support, guide, and welcome proposals and suggestions;
- Intervene with foreign students in class to provide linguistic mediation and intercultural activities.



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A VIEW ON I.O ORTE

The Orte institute is an Istituto Omnicomprensivo, this implies that it contains school grades from kindergarten to secondary school. The latter includes two Licei and two Technical Institutes for a total of four addresses: Liceo delle Scienze Umane (LSU), Liceo Scientifico (LS) both Traditional and with Biomedical curvature, Amministrazione Finanza e Marketing (AFM) and Costruzioni Ambiente e Territorio (CAT).

SCHOOL GRADE	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign/Native
TOTAL INSTITUTE	1595	381	24%
HIGH SCHOOL	747	108	15%
LICEI	440	54	12%
TECNICI	307	44	14%
SECONDARY SCHOOL	240	56	23%
PRIMARY SCHOOL O.S.	173	87	50%
PRIMARY SCHOOL O.C.	224	45	20%
KINDERGARTEN O.S.	92	59	64%
KINDERGARTEN O.C.	119	26	22%

Table 2. Total number of native and foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte based on the school grade.

Our school is attended by 1595 students, whose 24% are foreign students (**Table 2**). This high concentration of foreign students is mainly due to the fact that Orte is the principal railway junction of the Viterbo province, at about 50 minutes by train from Rome, a multiethnic metropolitan city which offers more job opportunities to immigrants. In particular, there are students from Africa, Bangladesh, India, South America, Romania, Albania, Morocco and other countries. The higher rate of immigrant students attend the kindergarten, the primary school and the junior high school and tends to decrease in the high-school.

In our school, the general evaluation of the students is carried out in two phases: the first phase takes place in February (first quarter) and the second phase occurs at the end of the school year, in June (second quarter).



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The following tables summarize the deficiencies found in the two phases for foreign students in the first and second quarters.

1° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency
Secondary School	57	18	32 %
1° class	23	6	26%
2° class	16	6	38%
3° class	18	6	33%

Table 3. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte secondary school with deficiency in the first quarter school period.

At the secondary level, the interim assessment shows that 32% of foreign students have insufficient marks, especially in the second class (38%). The most critical subjects are Mathematics, Science and English.

1° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency
High School	109	69	63%
AFM	31	19	61%
CAT	24	18	75%
LS	23	10	43%
LSU	31	22	71%

Table 4. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte high school with deficiency in the first quarter school period.

At the intermediate assessment, 63.30% of foreign students at the high school achieved a failing mark. In particular, CAT is the school with the highest number of deficiencies (75%). The subject with the highest failure rate is mathematics.



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In the final assessment of the secondary school, only the 4% of the foreign students achieved insufficient marks, and the 2% have not met the academic requirements for the second quarter of the school year, and therefore have not been promoted to the next class.

2° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency	Foreign students not admitted to next class	% Foreign students not admitted to next class
secondaryschool	56	2	4 %	1	2%
1° class	22	1	5%	/	/
2° class	16	/	/	1	6%
3° class	18	1	6%	/	/

Table 5. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte secondary school with deficiency in the second quarter school period and those who fail the year.

2° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency	Foreignstudents not admitted to next class	% Foreign students not admitted to next class
High School	108	31	29%	19	18%
AFM	30	14	47%	4	13%
CAT	24	5	21%	5	21%
LS	22	4	18%	3	14%
LSU	32	8	25%	7	22%

Table 6. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte high school with deficiency in the second quarter school period and those who fail the year.



According to **Table 6**, the final evaluation shows that the 29% of the foreign students had , at least, an insufficient mark. In particular the 18% of them achieved more than three insufficient marks, resulting in their exclusion from the subsequent class. Furthermore, the AFM course exhibited the highest failure rate (47%), while the Human Science Liceo had the highest proportion of foreign children not admitted (22%). In addition, Mathematics was identified as the most critical discipline.

In order to overcome the challenges faced by foreign students I.O Orte promotes activities designed to facilitate linguistic and cultural integration such as:

- Literacy courses have been devised for foreign pupils who are experiencing difficulties with the English language in all school grades. These courses are delivered in both curricular and extracurricular time, with the latter being allocated to teachers.

- Individual Mentoring and Discipline Skills Support Courses (PNRR Project: "Stop Scolastic Dispersion" Ministerial Decree 170/2022), designed for foreign and Italian students from the fifth grade of Primary School to the fifth grade of High School (in curricular time for students and extracurricular time for teachers).

- The Discipline Skills Enhancement Courses (PNRR Project: "Stop Scolastic Dispersion" Ministerial Decree 170/2022), designed for foreign and Italian pupils in Grades I and II of Secondary Schools (in extracurricular hours for students and teachers).

These efforts aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment and to enhance the academic success and well-being of foreign students but also to promote their smooth integration into society and workforce.



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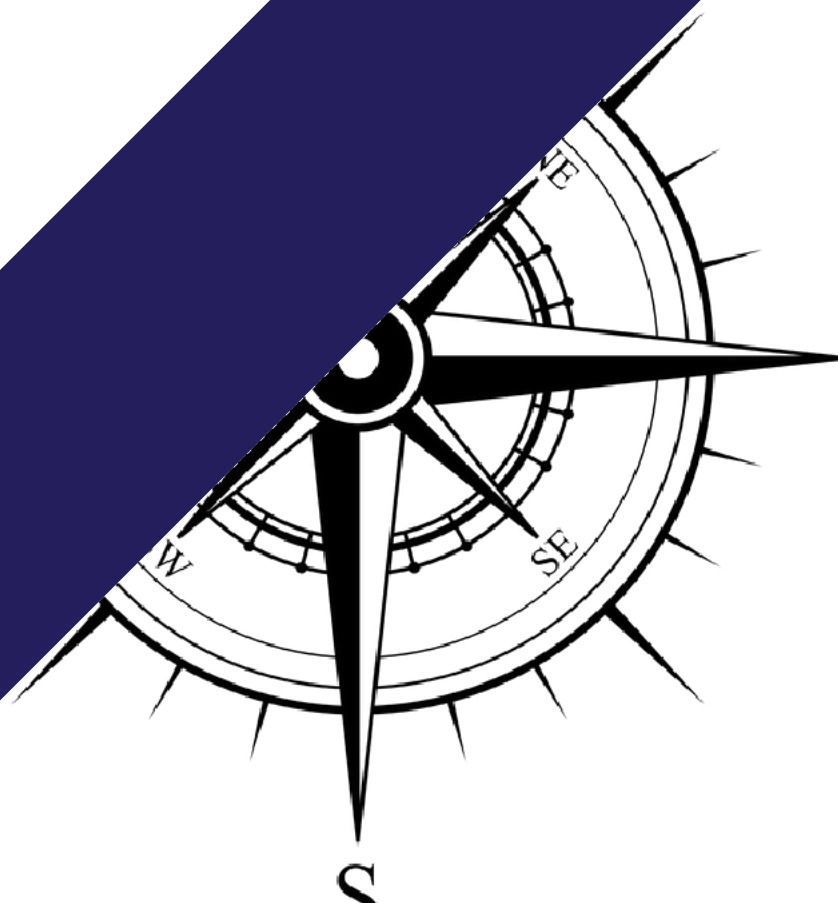


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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

Vulnerabilities in Career Guidance

Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago



Vulnerabilities in Career Guidance

1. Objective

Vulnerabilities are a reality in Career Guidance. With this work it is intended that teachers need to be aware of the impact of vulnerable conditions on their occupational choices and to transfer to them the ways in which they can be taken care of to prevent the transmission of inequalities.

The **aim** of this work package is to:

- inform and raise awareness on the specific vulnerability you chose, describing how it impacts the guidance process and in general the career development of students;
- provide practical suggestions on how to provide support to students with the vulnerability in question.

2. Vulnerabilities in career guidance: AEJS specific vulnerability

The most common vulnerability in our school cluster, whose students face more difficulties in defining their professional paths is: low socio-economic status.

2.1. Reasons for socio-economic status vulnerability

- The Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago is in Poceirão, belonging to the municipality of Palmela, district of Setúbal.
- The schools are in a rural environment, and this is characterized by a socio-cultural isolation that decisively conditions the participation of its population in the most diverse cultural and artistic manifestations.
- The training acquired by students in these areas is only offered or disseminated at school.
- The local dominant activity is linked to the primary sector and in particular agriculture and viticulture.



Map for parishes of Poceiro and Marateca. (2016, Câmara Municipal de Palmela)

- There are numerous deficiencies in terms of infrastructure basic sanitation, transport, school network, leisure activities, among others.

- The educational qualifications of parents or guardians are in majority the basic education.
- The resident population is now faced with a significant lack of employment and empirical knowledge leads us to believe that the impoverishment of families living here is becoming more and more pronounced, something that is proven by a growing percentage of students covered by the Ação Social Escolar (School Social Aid).

2.1.1. What is Ação Social Escolar (School Social Aid)?

Ação Social Escolar (ASE) / School Social Aid is a measure to support families with school-age children, that reimburses school expenses for students belonging to families with lower resources.

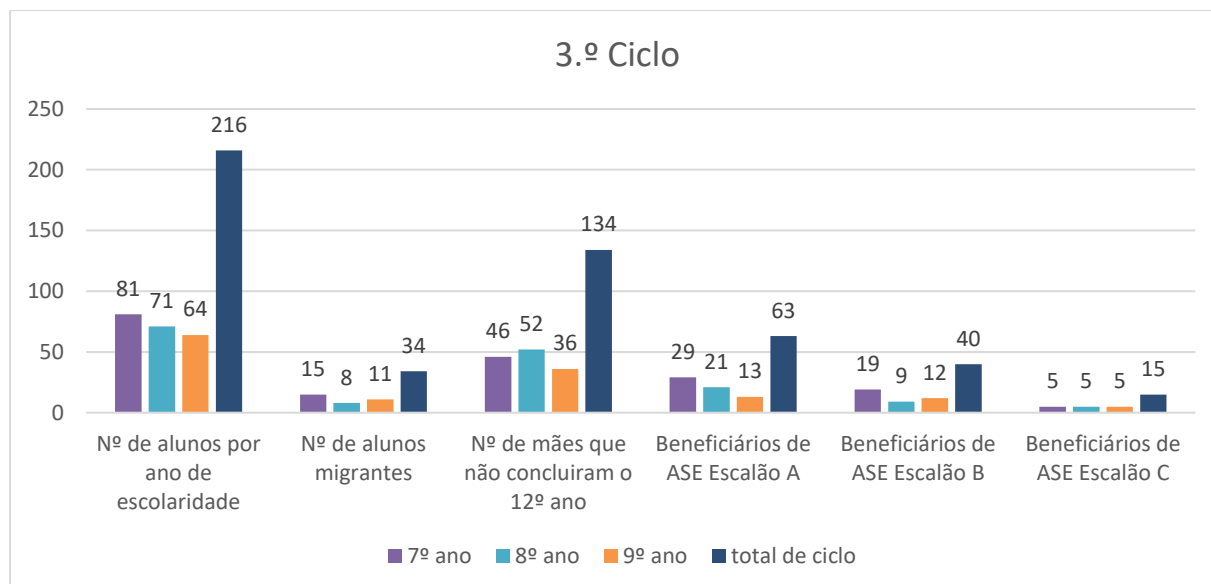
The "ASE" includes three brackets (A, B and C), which are defined according to the annual household income, based on the value of the Indexante dos Apoios Sociais (IAS) / Social Support Index.

- Ação Social Escolar (School Social Aid) Brackets (in 2022 the IAS was 443,20 €)

Escalão	Rendimento de referência	Rendimento em 2022
A	igual ou superior a $0,5 \times IAS \times 14$	até 3.102,40€
B	Superior a $0,5 \times IAS \times 14$ e igual ou inferior a $1 \times IAS \times 14$	mais de 3.102,40€ até 6.204,80€
C	Superior a $1 \times IAS \times 14$ e igual ou inferior a $1,7 \times IAS \times 14$	mais de 6.204,80€ até 9.307,20€

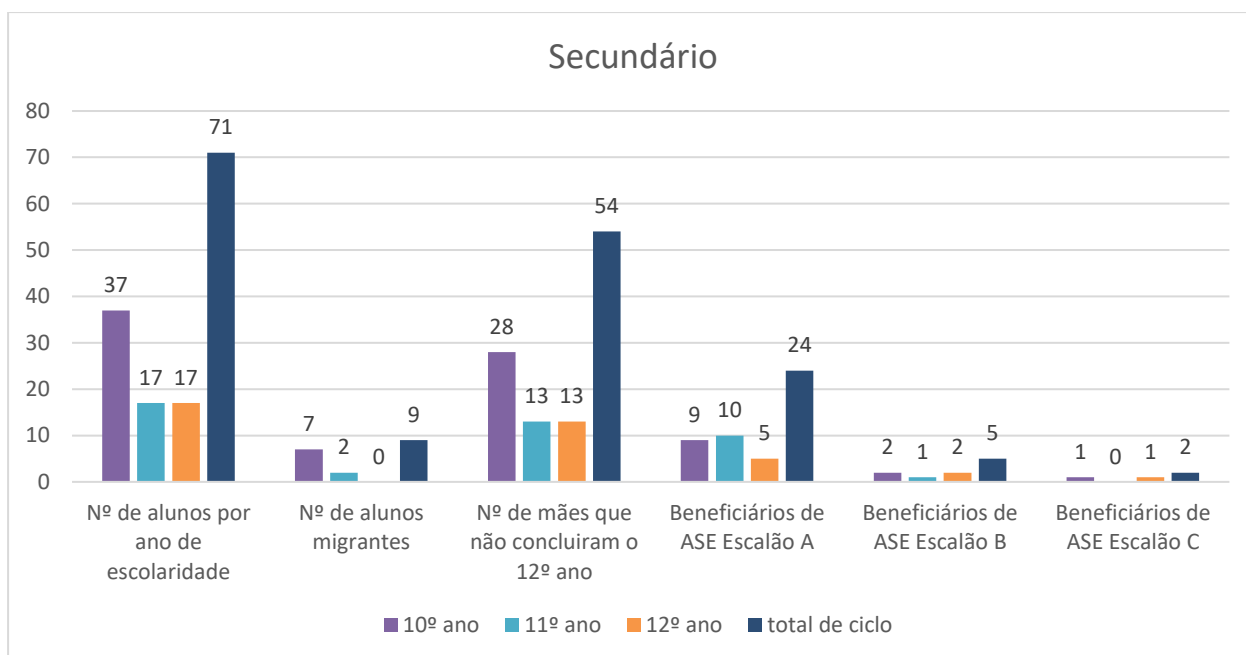
Next we show the rate of students in our school who have ASE.

ASE: 3ciclo / Middle school stats



Analyzing the graph, we can see that most students who have ASE benefit A and B. Of the 216 students in the 3rd cycle, 134 mothers do not have the 12th grade.

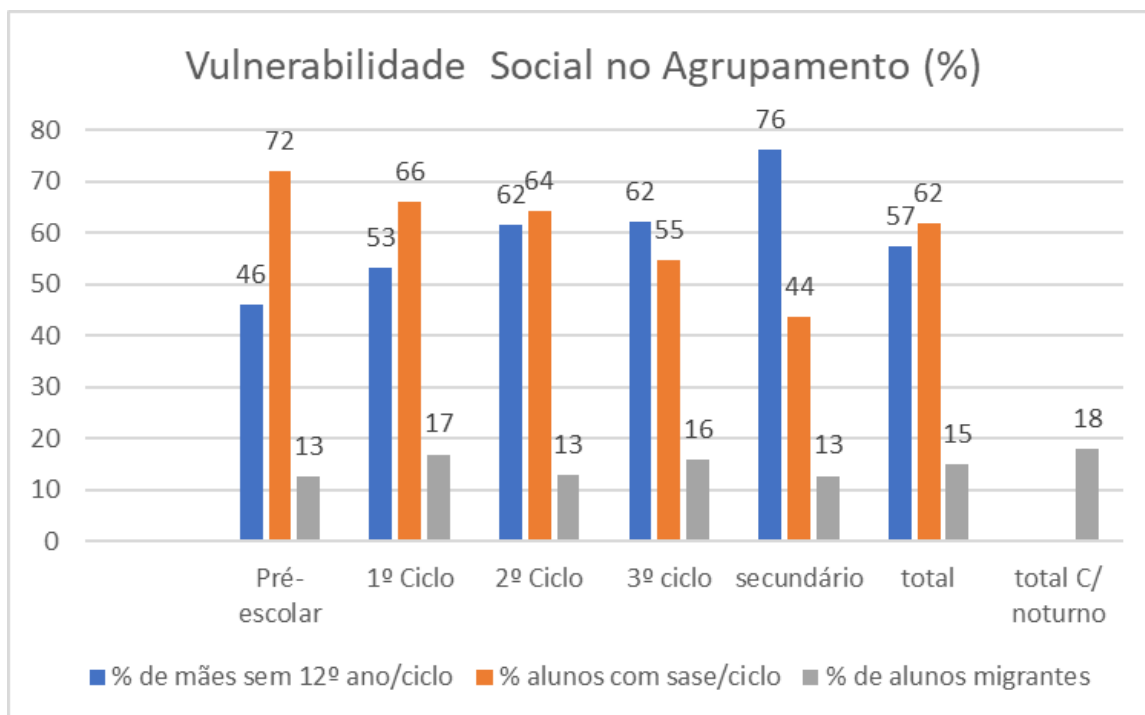
ASE: Secondary school stats



Analyzing the graph, we can see that most students who have ASE benefit A. Of the 71 students in the secondary school, 54 mothers do not have the 12th grade.

2.2. Vulnerability rate

The combination of these various factors makes the vulnerability rate of our school cluster very high.



The social vulnerability of the school cluster, using the formula provided by the Ministry of Education, is 49%.

3. Impact on career guidance/professional

- Career guidance for socially disadvantaged students is essential to promote equal opportunities and help them reach their potential;
- Socio-economic challenges can lead to lower self-esteem and self-efficacy, affecting students' aspirations and confidence in achieving career goals;
- To help break the cycle of poverty, it is critical to adopt an approach that involves action in multiple areas.

3.1. Vulnerabilities in career guidance

In our school:

- Students with low social status face challenges in their career decision-making and overall success;
- Students have poor expectations for the future and little aspirations;
- Students struggle to make informed choices about their future when choosing a career path.

3.2. Strategies to address vulnerabilities in career guidance:

There are several strategies to combat vulnerabilities in career guidance. The educational strategies used in our school:

- Apply for the Ministry of Education program TEIP (Programa Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária) - Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (1)



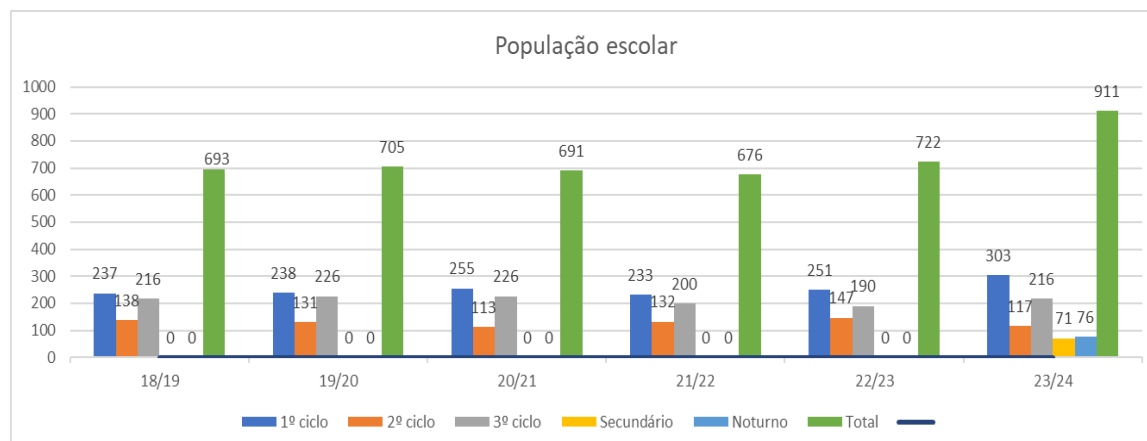
- Provide students with in-school experiences they don't have in their families:
 - like visits to museums, cultural and artistic exhibitions, theatre, science centers, theme parks, big city trips, participation in ERASMUS mobility
 - equipping the school with special classrooms and materials: STEAM Lab, greenhouse, vegetable garden/vineyard, and teaching kitchen.
- Offering training and career-oriented programs that align with local labor market needs can enhance employability for students such as:
 - professional courses in secondary school in the primary and tertiary sector:
 - Gardening and green spaces
 - Viticulture / Wine making
 - Bar & Restaurant
 - night school for adults so they can get their middle/high school diploma.

(1) TEIP is an educational policy measure aimed at school clusters located in territories with a high number of children and young people at risk of social vulnerability, aiming to ensure educational inclusion and success, and improve the quality of learning and combat school dropout.

3.3. Outcome:

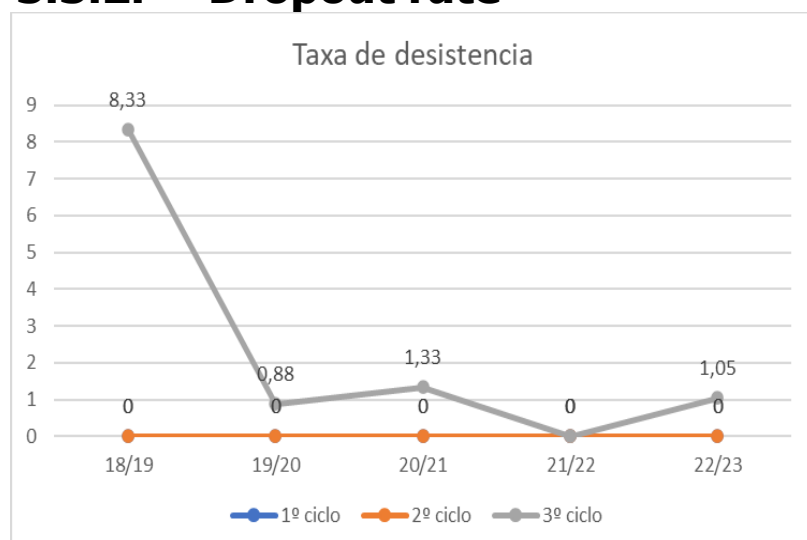
3.3.1. School population

The educational strategies used in our school result in:



The increase in the school population from the 22/23 school year to the 23/24 school year is due to the implementation of professional secondary courses & night school.

3.3.2. Dropout rate



Sharp drop in dropout rate

4. Educational strategies used in our school:

- In parents-teacher meetings with educate parents about the educational system planning to empower them to support their children's aspirations and career path decisions.
- Every 9th grade student gets counseling with the School Psychologist - Orientação vocacional - to provide personalized career guidance to each student, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds;
-

4.1. Orientação vocacional / Career guidance with the School Psychologist

Vocational guidance is a process that takes place throughout an individual's life, from childhood right through to old age (Super, 1980; Balbinotti, 2003; Freeman, 1993). Adolescence is by excellence a phase of development understood as a transitional stage. Overlapping the vocational valence, where there is uncertainty about vocational preferences, given the little exploration of the self in relation to the school and professional world (Taveira, 1999), deciding on the school and professional future becomes a challenging task both for the adolescent and for the entire educational system that surrounds them. The intervention in the area of vocational counselling benefits adolescents in terms of transition issues, as a basis for security, guidance and a source of information (Taveira, 2000). In this sense, vocational guidance programmes are designed to promote the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills for career management and development throughout life (Pocinho, 2011).

In short, the vocational guidance process is mostly based on personal, school and professional exploration, in order to develop vocational decision-making.



In our school, through the vocational guidance programme for 9th graders, we are trying to meet a need felt by the students, parents/guardians, teachers and anyone else who is committed to improving the quality of our education system. The aim of these sessions is to provide support to students at this transitional stage in the process of identifying their future field of study and/or choosing a profession.

This process begins at a meeting with the class directors of the students involved in the process, with the objective of engaging them and familiarising them with the different stages, as well as explaining their role in the process to the students.

This is followed by group sessions with the introduction of self-knowledge dynamics and the completion of questionnaires.

A briefing session is held on possible school courses after the 9th grade. The process is usually conducted over four sessions (in some cases more may be needed) where, through the use of different structured or semi-structured tests, the individual's vocational profile is drawn up. The aim of the tests is to assess the young person's interests, which tells us what areas will be most motivating for them, and their aptitudes, i.e. what interests, aptitudes (which indicates their preferred cognitive style) and values are needed to undertake a certain type of task.

Every year there is a careers fair called "Futurália", in which students (supervised by their class directors and the psychologist) attend in order to find out about all the available educational opportunities.

Through interaction dynamics between young people and the dialogue with the psychologist and their teachers, the students gradually build up their journey, resulting in a portfolio.

At the end of the process, a report is submitted containing the graphical construction of the individual's profile. In the individual interview, an academic and/or professional project is outlined, in which courses, training and/or areas of study that are more compatible with their vocational profile are suggested.

Summary Table:

SESSIONS	STEPS
1	Meeting with the Class Directors of the students involved in the Vocational Guidance process
2	Group session involving self-knowledge dynamics and the completion of questionnaires relating to interests and motivations.
3	Clarification of possible school careers after the 9th grade
4	Individual questionnaires - Aptitudes Battery
5	Individual questionnaires - Aptitudes Battery, Conclusion
6	Exploring values "The target of values"
7	Application of vocational guidance tests - Professional Interests and Preferences Test - IPPR
8	Study visit to Futurália 2024
9	Presentation of the educational offer in the area/other schools
10	Individual interviews with analysis of reports and informed support in the decision-making process

5. Conclusion

Addressing social economics vulnerability in the guidance process requires a multi-faceted approach that includes enhancing resources, building supportive networks, and providing targeted interventions;

By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can help level the playing field and ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have the same opportunity to succeed in their chosen careers.



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Thank You

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Sandra Santos - Psychologist

5 July 2024

Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago