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V4F GUIDELINES

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The project combines guidance (career guidance, education in choice) with a green approach. The goal is to help young people and adults orient themselves toward sustainable life, study, and work pathways, enhancing green skills and ecological citizenship.

Our project strategy transversally integrates environmental sustainability and guidance education, promoting a vision of professional and personal futures founded on ecological values and responsibility toward the planet. The green approach is not just a topic of content, but a methodology that guides the planning and implementation of activities: we encourage sustainable lifestyles, the conscious use of resources, waste reduction, and low-impact mobility. In parallel, the project intends to strengthen participants' guidance competencies, helping them identify educational and professional paths consistent with the new opportunities offered by the ecological transition (green jobs, circular economy, sustainable innovation).

In brief, the pillars of the approach:

- Operational Sustainability → impact reduction, online meetings, green travel.
- Educational Sustainability → education for conscious guidance and green jobs.
- Cultural Sustainability → promotion of responsible behavior and active citizenship.

The project, aimed at creating guidance guidelines for VET (Vocational Education and Training), promotes a digital approach and the modernization of guidance processes, the enhancement of digital skills, and the use of digital tools as an incentive for inclusion and methodological innovation. The digital approach is not limited to the use of technological tools; it represents a true culture of innovation, oriented toward the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of guidance and training processes.

- Digital as a tool → online collaboration, document management, dissemination of results.
- Digital as content → raising awareness on counselors, trainers and students development of digital skills.
- Digital as culture → innovation of guidance and inclusion models through accessible technologies.

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Introduction

The project WE CHOOSE VET FOR THE FUTURE! is framed within the priorities established by the Copenhagen Declaration (2010), reinforced by the "Education and Training 2020" (ET2020) strategic framework, and integrates with the UN 2030 Agenda goals for sustainable development. Furthermore, the project comes to life from a reflection by the proposing partners on the OECD "Education at a Glance 2023" report and data published over the last two years by Eurostat, considering the different policy approaches regarding school guidance.

The project intends to contribute to make possible organizational and cross-sectoral changes within the education and training system, increasing the quality of work and practices of the organizations and institutions involved, and responding more effectively to their common needs through transnational and intersectoral cooperation.

The project's specific objectives are:

- To increase the attractiveness of initial VET (Vocational Education and Training) by creating suitable conditions for greater permeability between different educational levels, particularly between school education and higher vocational training.
- To develop and promote inclusive and accessible educational environments based on the principles of equity, integration, and equal opportunities, reducing the VET system's risk of "ghettoization" while simultaneously increasing the perceived quality of programs, facilities, and teaching services.
- To reduce the dropout and early school leaving rate during the transition toward a higher level of training.

The partnership is committed in developing:

- New capacity-building pathways for managers, coordinators, teachers, educators, and operators.
- New common models and methods for transnational and cross-sectoral cooperation.
- The effectiveness of the guidance system, making it capable of integrating into educational programs and supporting the student throughout the entire training path, rather than just during delicate transitions.

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- the reduction of the risk of vocational training schools turning into "educational ghettos."
- Better communication, promotion, and perception of VET quality as a valid initial choice, capable of offering high-level educational and cultural programs, structures, and services while ensuring professional preparation consistent with labor market needs.

P.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

Within the framework of the Project, an innovative program of intersectoral and multidisciplinary training and cooperation workshops between trainers was implemented, leading to the definition of these common methodological Guidelines for initial VET guidance.

Coordinators, teachers, trainers, and operators active in VET and school education were both protagonists and beneficiaries of a structured program of international peer-to-peer training and cooperation workshops. This path represented an important opportunity not only for peer exchange but also for shared learning and the co-construction of innovative educational practices. Through constant and structured dialogue, participants collaborated on defining a common methodological model for initial VET guidance, aiming to effectively integrate national methods and procedures, overcoming fragmentation and enhancing respective specificities.

The most significant impact of this process occurred in terms of teaching effectiveness: the exchange between professionals from different contexts encouraged the adoption of more flexible, inclusive, and student-centered pedagogical strategies, thereby strengthening the capacity of training institutions to respond to the real needs of students. The intersectoral and international approach also stimulated curricular innovation, contributing to the creation of a more open, dynamic, and motivating educational environment where learning becomes a meaningful and future-oriented experience.

The developed model, being the result of concrete cooperation field-tested, serves as an effective tool to improve the quality of the VET offer, making it not only more attractive and sustainable but also more capable of valorising individual talents and accompanying young people toward informed choices and professional paths consistent with their aspirations and skills.

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P.2 Target Audience of the Document

The target audience for the following VET (Vocational Education and Training) guidance guidelines includes a wide range of stakeholders involved for various reasons in the educational, training, and support processes for young people.

Primary target audience of the VET guidance guidelines:

- School principals and Managers of Professional Training Institutions: To plan and integrate effective guidance strategies into training paths and improve educational governance from a guidance perspective.
- VET Teachers, Tutors, and Trainers: To adopt consistent methodological approaches, shared tools, and guidance practices capable of actively supporting student choices by enhancing their potential and interests.
- School and Vocational Guidance Counselors: To strengthen the quality of guidance services through models and guidelines that favor personalized and continuous support for young people in key moments of their journey.
- Educators and Practitioners in Employment Services, Guidance Centers, and Local Agencies: To foster integration between education, training, and labor systems, with the goal of building coherent, inclusive guidance paths aimed at job placement.
- Policy Makers and Education/Youth Policy Managers (Local, Regional, National): To have a methodological reference framework useful for defining system interventions and strategies in line with European objectives of quality, inclusivity, and attractiveness of VET.
- Parents and Families: To be adequately informed and involved in decision-making processes related to their children's school and professional path, strengthening their role as informed supporters.
- Students and Young People in Transition (School, Training, Work): To have access to clear, accessible, and future-oriented tools that help them make educational and professional choices based on a real knowledge of themselves, the opportunities available, and the labor market.

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1. Guidance as a Continuous Educational Process

1.1 Definition and General Principles of Guidance

European literature on guidance is extensive and reflects a growing focus on the role of guidance as a central component of education and training reform policies.

Since 2000, Europe has considered guidance not only as "educational and vocational guidance" but also as "lifelong guidance." This means that guidance is understood as a permanent process of learning and training, designed to accompany the individual throughout their entire life journey, from study to work.

The European Recommendation on guidance emphasizes the need to strengthen school guidance, vocational guidance, and counseling. This translates into a commitment toward researching and revising guidance practices, with an interest in formative and transformative models that enhance individual empowerment. The literature also includes historical and normative analyses of school guidance, providing a comprehensive framework of its various meanings and its development over time.

Over time, the concept of guidance has undergone significant conceptual shifts. Initially, it was primarily understood as a practice aimed at directing, guiding, or supporting an individual in choosing their educational or professional path.

However, in the last decade, the answer to the question "What is guidance?" in school and teaching has changed significantly. Guidance has transformed from a mere moment of information into a concept of "life-long learning."

The historical evolution of the concept and practice of guidance has been extensively reconstructed by both foreign and Italian scholars. Guidance is no longer just an individual matter but a concern of collective interest involving the global development of civil society, moving beyond the exclusive role of the family.

This places the primary goal of the counselor at the center: to guide students during their studies, assisting them in making choices (including school choice) most suited to their aspirations and aptitudes. Furthermore, the counselor helps students develop an audit of their skills (hard and soft skills) and professional goals.

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Scientific literature on school guidance agrees that the era of episodic interventions has ended. Instead, there is a need for a structured and coordinated system of interventions that—starting from the recognition of students' talents, aptitudes, inclinations, and merit—accompanies them in an increasingly personalized way to critically and proactively develop their own life project, including their professional one.

We have taken as a reference the definition of GUIDANCE from Ministerial Decree No. 328 of December 22, 2022, by the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit (MIM):

"Guidance is a process aimed at facilitating self-knowledge, as well as knowledge of the educational, occupational, social, cultural, and economic context of reference, and the strategies implemented to relate to and interact within these realities, in order to foster the maturation and development of the skills necessary to autonomously define or redefine personal and professional goals consistent with the context, to develop or redevelop a life project, and to support the relative choices."

In this perspective, the teacher plays a fundamental role as the primary guide in the student's life, possessing profound educational value.

Individuals require continuous guidance and re-orientation regarding educational choices, work activities, and social life. The talents and excellences of every student, whatever they may be, will not develop if they are not constantly recognized and exercised, thereby compromising the role of personal merit in educational and professional success. Guidance therefore constitutes a responsibility for all levels and grades of school, for teachers, families, and the various institutional and social actors with whom the student interacts.

Teaching activities from a guidance perspective are organized starting from the students' experiences, moving beyond the purely transmissive dimension of knowledge and enhancing laboratory-based teaching, flexible times and spaces, and the opportunities offered by the exercise of autonomy. Guidance begins as early as kindergarten and primary school as a support for confidence, self-esteem, commitment, motivation, and the recognition of talents and aptitudes, also fostering the overcoming of difficulties within the learning processes.

Guidance is a continuous and permanent process aimed at supporting the person in knowing themselves and their educational, professional, social, and cultural context, in order to:

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- develop self-guidance skills;
- define or redefine personal, educational, and professional goals;
- build and sustain a conscious life project.

Contemporary guidance can no longer be reduced to a linear spatial or decisional function; it is configured as a dynamic process of existential navigation in a profoundly changed social, cultural, and technological context.

Global flows (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes, ideoscapes) redefine identity references and make guidance a necessary skill to navigate intertwined analog and virtual realities.

Guidance is a complex process that is not immediately measurable, as its object is the future perspective—a time that does not yet exist on an empirical level. It is based on the mechanisms of anticipation and their motivational and emotional value.

Reducing guidance to an immediate response to the "here and now" means betraying its educational and transformative nature, leading to educational myopia and stereotyped decisions.

1.2 European reference context for guidance in schools

Since the Lisbon European Council (2000), Vocational Education and Training (VET) has been recognized as a strategic lever for the development of a knowledge-based economy, capable of promoting social inclusion, cohesion, mobility, employability, and competitiveness.

The Copenhagen Declaration (2002) strengthened European cooperation regarding VET, identifying four key priorities:

- Strengthening the European dimension of VET.
- Improving information, guidance, and counseling systems.
- Developing tools for the recognition and validation of competencies.
- Raising quality standards.

The Bruges Communiqué (2010) further emphasized the need to improve the communication and perception of VET, linking it more effectively to socio-economic policies.

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European policies recognize VET as a key tool to counter Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET). The European Union has set a goal to reduce the ELET rate to below 9% by 2030. However, the most recent data shows that the European average remains above this threshold. Studies highlight that school dropout is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon requiring integrated strategies for prevention, intervention, and compensation, adapted to national contexts.

The European Union advocates that all member states' training systems pursue, among others, the following objectives:

- Reduce the percentage of students who leave school early to less than 10%.
- Decrease the gap between school and socio-economic realities, reduce the mismatch between training and work, and particularly counter the NEET phenomenon (Not in Education, Employment or Training - a population aged 15 to 29 who are neither employed nor enrolled in an education or training path).
- Strengthen lifelong learning and training throughout one's life.
- Enhance and invest in technical and professional training, establishing it as an integrated, modular, gradual, and continuous chain up to tertiary education (such as ITS Academies in Italy), and increase the percentage of qualifications corresponding to level 5, and especially level 6, of the European Qualifications Framework.

The recent "Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success" adopted on November 28, 2022, which replaces the 2011 Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving, outlines new intervention priorities for pursuing school success for all students, regardless of personal characteristics or family, cultural, and socio-economic background. This includes strategic and integrated measures such as coordination with local services, continuous dialogue with students and families, and a balanced system of prevention, intervention, and compensation measures, along with constant monitoring. Specifically regarding guidance, the Recommendation emphasizes the need to strengthen school guidance, vocational guidance and counseling, and training to support the acquisition of career management skills.

The digital revolution and the pervasiveness of cyberspace produce a reconfiguration of the human experience, relationships, and learning processes. Guidance is called upon to respond to:

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- Global mobility.
- Cultural pluralism.
- The deconstruction of stable identities.
- The transition from linear industrial models to networked and algorithmic models.

Contemporaneity is characterized by:

- A flattening onto the present.
- The loss of shared value references.
- The fragmentation of learning paths.

The dichotomy of *esopaideia* / *endopaideia* highlights the detachment between informal learning and formal educational contexts, requiring a profound rethinking of guidance as a bridge between subjective experience and future planning.

1.3 The dimensions of guidance: informative, formative, and consultative

In consistency with European frameworks on lifelong guidance, orientation is understood as a multidimensional process that integrates different functions in a complementary and interconnected way. An effective guidance system does not rely on a single type of intervention but balancedly combines the informative, formative, and consultative dimensions within a unified, continuous, and person-centered approach.

These dimensions should not be considered as separate or rigidly sequential phases, but rather as integrated components that respond to the growth and developmental needs of students throughout the various stages of their educational and professional journey.

The Informative Dimension

The informative dimension of guidance aims to ensure equitable, transparent, and up-to-date access to information regarding education and training pathways, qualifications, professions, and employment opportunities.

In the context of VET (leFP), it supports students and families in understanding:

- Characteristics and structure of VET pathways;
- Access requirements, transitions, and possibilities for further study;
- Qualification levels and recognition systems;

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- Career prospects and subsequent training opportunities.

At the European level, this dimension contributes to transparency and mobility, also through the use of common reference tools. However, information—if not accompanied by educational and reflective processes—is insufficient: to be truly guiding, it must be contextualized, accessible, and mediated or facilitated.

In summary, characteristic elements of the informative dimension include:

- Information on school paths, universities, Higher Technical Institutes (ITS), and professions;
- Access to education and labor data (e.g., the "UNICA" platform);
- Knowledge of educational and occupational opportunities.

The Formative (Educational) Dimension

The formative dimension represents the pedagogical heart of guidance. It aims at the development of guidance competencies, supporting the student in building self-awareness, the ability to explore the context, and the capacity to make responsible decisions.

Through educational activities integrated into training pathways, students are accompanied to:

- Recognize interests, values, aptitudes, and strengths;
- Understand the relationship between learning, work, and their life project;
- Develop skills for managing choices and transitions;
- Strengthen motivation, confidence, and a sense of self-efficacy.

In VET pathways, the formative dimension is strictly connected to competence-based teaching, laboratory activities, and learning in real-world contexts. In this perspective, guidance becomes an integral part of educational action and contributes significantly to inclusion, dropout prevention, and employability.

In summary, characteristic elements of the formative dimension include:

- Development of guidance and transversal (soft) skills;
- Guidance-oriented and laboratory-based teaching;
- Integration of guidance into the curriculum and the Three-Year Educational Plan (PTOF);
- Construction of the life project.

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The Consultative Dimension

The consultative dimension of guidance takes the form of personalized accompaniment actions, specifically aimed at students undergoing moments of choice, transition, or difficulty. It is based on individual or small-group interviews intended to support decision-making and re-orientation processes.

The consultative approach values the autonomy of the person, avoiding prescriptive logic, and promotes the student's responsibility regarding their own choices. The counselor, tutor, or teacher with a guidance function acts as a facilitator, helping the student to:

- Interpret information in relation to their own experience;
- Identify resources and strategies to overcome obstacles;
- Clarify personal and professional goals;
- Face transitions in a conscious and resilient manner.

In an inclusive guidance system, the consultative dimension plays an essential role in preventing school dropout and supporting the most vulnerable students.

In summary, characteristic elements of the consultative dimension include:

- Guidance interviews;
- Guidance counseling;
- Competence audits (skills assessment);
- Support during moments of transition and choice.

An Integrated and Consistent Approach

The effectiveness of guidance depends on the balanced integration of these three dimensions within a structured and quality framework. Fragmented or episodic interventions are not sufficient to respond to the complexity of educational and life paths.

The integration of the informative, formative, and consultative dimensions allows guidance to contribute significantly to:

- Conscious and informed choices;
- Personal and professional development;
- Social inclusion and equal opportunities;
- Construction of educational and professional paths that are sustainable over time.

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This approach reflects the European vision of guidance as a continuous educational process, student-centered and future-oriented, capable of supporting individuals in facing the changes of society and the world of work.

1.4 Guidance and transitions: school – training – work

Guidance is:

- a strategic function for countering dropout and educational failure;
- a permanent right of the individual;
- a unified and integrated process, centered on the student's needs;
- a tool to make the student an active protagonist of their own choices.

Guidance plays a central role during moments of transition, understood not as simple administrative steps, but as complex phases of identity, motivational, and project-based redefinition. The transitions between school, vocational training, and the world of work represent critical moments in which the risk of disorientation, dropout, and uninformed choices is particularly high.

From this perspective, guidance cannot be limited to providing information on available opportunities; it must accompany the person in developing the ability to read the context, understand their own resources, and build a coherent and realistic project. Transitions must therefore be supported through continuous actions that allow the student to acquire tools for interpreting change and managing uncertainty.

In the VET system, guidance assumes a strategic function especially during the transition from lower secondary school, but also during internal shifts within training pathways and in the exit phase toward work or further studies. Effective guidance helps make transitions less traumatic and more formative, fostering continuity in learning paths and educational success.

Data and Critical Contexts

Eurostat and Cedefop data highlight a progressive decrease in initial VET enrollment over the 1995–2015 period, with significant differences between countries. In some contexts, such as Italy, the decline is particularly concentrated in VET, while in others, it is more generalized.

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This trend is closely linked to the phenomena of early school leaving and dropout, which particularly affect:

- students between 14 and 15 years old;
- male students;
- students with a migratory background;
- critical transitions between lower and upper secondary school, especially within vocational institutes.

In this scenario, guidance plays a key role in supporting conscious transitions and preventing pathways toward exclusion.

The choice of a VET path often occurs during a critical transition phase, particularly after lower secondary school. In many cases, this choice is a consequence of:

- previous academic failures;
- uncertainty and a lack of confidence;
- inadequate or late guidance.

Weak guidance compromises the quality of the transition and contributes to the risk of dropout and abandonment.

Making the Future "Thinkable"

Building guidance means going beyond the "present indicative" and helping students make the future:

- thinkable,
- shareable,
- purposeful.

The future perspective is not an individual fantasy, but a mental and ethical-epistemic posture that connects mind, emotions, and will transforming the future into a shared educational object.

Contemporary guidance moves beyond a purely functionalist vision and is configured as a sense-making process, oriented toward the development of identity, self-determination, and the ability to plan one's own future in a conscious and responsible way.

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1.5 Guidance in the different cycles of education

Guidance:

- does not end with individual choices;
- spans all stages of growth;
- shapes the entire existential journey.

It is a longitudinal process that accompanies the development of identity and the life project, preventing disaffection, school dropout, and disorientation.

School dropout is a multifactorial phenomenon rooted in the interaction between personal, family, school, and social dimensions. Guidance represents a strategic preventive lever, capable of strengthening engagement, the sense of belonging, and educational continuity, thereby contributing to the reduction of inequalities.

Guidance must be articulated in a way that is consistent with the specificities of the different cycles of education, adapting languages, tools, and objectives to the students' developmental stages.

- In the first cycle, guidance has a predominantly formative and exploratory function: it supports self-knowledge, the development of self-esteem, and the discovery of interests and aptitudes. The goal is not to anticipate definitive choices, but to build the foundations of guidance competencies.
- In the second cycle, and particularly within VET pathways, guidance becomes more structured and intentional. Alongside the formative dimension, the informative and consultative dimensions are strengthened through actions aimed at understanding educational and professional opportunities, engaging with the world of work, and building personal and professional projects.
- In the transition phase toward adulthood, guidance takes on the role of accompanying the individual toward autonomy, supporting the ability to make conscious decisions, face changes, and manage non-linear paths.

From this perspective, guidance across the different cycles is not fragmented but is part of an educational continuum.

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1.6 Guidance competencies: what they are and how they develop

Guidance competencies represent the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow a person to consciously manage their educational and professional choices throughout their life. They include the ability to know oneself, explore the context, make decisions, plan, and evaluate one's own experiences.

The development of guidance competencies occurs through intentional educational experiences integrated into teaching and training contexts. These are not innate skills, but rather abilities that can be learned, practiced, and strengthened over time.

In VET pathways, guidance competencies are closely linked to work on professional and transversal (soft) skills. Laboratory experiences, work-based learning, and contact with the world of work represent privileged contexts for developing awareness, responsibility, and decision-making abilities.

The choice of a VET path is often influenced by previous experiences of failure or uncertainty. Effective guidance aims to develop:

- self-awareness;
- reflective and planning skills;
- transition management;
- critical reading of the context;
- recognition of skills, interests, and potential;
- the ability to design one's own educational and professional path.

These competencies allow the individual to become the lead actor in their own journey, developing self-determination and self-guidance skills.

Within this framework, the teacher assumes a central role as a guidance agent, as recognized by the Italian National Guidelines for Guidance (Ministerial Decree 328/2022), in alignment with European policies on lifelong guidance.

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2. VET: Identity, Values, and Opportunities

2.1 VET within the Educational Systems of the Project's European Countries

Vocational Education and Training (VET) represents a fundamental component of European educational systems, although with different organizational models. In various countries, VET is configured as a response to the needs for inclusion, employability, and the development of skills required by the labor market.

Despite structural differences, a common vision emerges of VET as a path of equal educational dignity, oriented toward the integral development of the person and the enhancement of practical and professional skills. Guidance plays a key role in overcoming existing stereotypes and prejudices, contributing to a conscious and informed choice.

The VET systems in partner countries present different characteristics but share common goals:

- Italy: A structured system with three-year qualifications and four-year diplomas, recognized at the national level and functional for both entering the workforce and continuing studies.
 - Critical issues of the Italian system:
 - High rate of NEETs (aged 15–29).
 - Early school leaving.
 - Mismatch between education and the labor market.
- Poland: VET is predominantly school-based and currently undergoing reform, with strong business involvement, mandatory work-based learning, greater flexibility, and a focus on lifelong learning.
- Bulgaria: A VET system characterized by four-year paths, a strong dual component (50–70% in-company training), validation of prior learning, and modernization processes oriented toward the labor market.

In all contexts, vocational guidance and collaboration with the world of work are decisive elements for the effectiveness of VET.

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2.2 Educational Offer and Professional Profiles

The VET educational offer is characterized by a strong connection with the needs of the local territory and the production system. Professional profiles are defined in terms of competencies, articulated into observable and marketable learning outcomes.

Guidance supports students in understanding path content, exit competencies, and professional prospects, fostering a choice consistent with personal interests, aptitudes, and expectations.

The main requirements of a structured system are:

- Moving beyond episodic interventions.
- Action throughout the entire educational path.
- Centrality of personalization and the recognition of talents.
- Integration between school, territory, work, and tertiary education.

2.3 Career Prospects and Opportunities for Further Studies

Contrary to a reductive view, VET offers multiple professional outlets and possibilities for continuation. Pathways can lead to direct entry into the world of work, but also to further training opportunities, including higher education or specialization paths.

Effective guidance is essential to make these opportunities visible and to counter the idea of "irreversible" choices, promoting a dynamic vision of life paths.

2.4 The Value of Dual Learning and Work-Based Learning (Alternanza)

Dual learning and work-based learning represent distinctive elements of VET. The integration between training and work experiences allows students to learn in real contexts, developing technical, transversal, and guidance skills.

From a guidance perspective, these experiences favor direct knowledge of professions, the verification of one's expectations, and the construction of a more conscious professional identity.

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2.5 VET and Inclusion: Personalized Paths and Compensatory Measures

VET plays a strategic role in promoting educational and social inclusion. The flexibility of the paths, personalization, and attention to the diverse needs of students allow for a response to situations of fragility, disadvantage, or special educational needs.

In this context, guidance becomes a tool for equity, aimed at valuing individual talents and preventing exclusion and dropout.

Numerous European studies confirm the role of VET as a tool for social inclusion. However, this function carries the risk of educational ghettoization, where VET paths are perceived as a residual option for students with academic difficulties.

A structural tension exists between:

- The need to ensure inclusion and accessibility.
- The requirement to maintain high standards of quality and attractiveness.

A lack of balance between these two aspects can weaken the perceived value of initial VET. In recent years, VET has taken on an increasing role in social inclusion, resulting in a risk of ghettoization understood as:

- Perception as a "second-class" path compared to high schools (licei) and technical institutes.
- Cultural and symbolic marginalization.
- Reduced attractiveness for students and families.

If not properly managed, this dynamic can reduce the perceived value of initial VET and reinforce vicious cycles of educational isolation.

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3. Methodological Models for VET Guidance

3.1 Early, Ongoing, and Outgoing Guidance

VET guidance is divided into three main phases: early, ongoing, and outgoing. Early guidance aims to prepare the student for their choice; ongoing guidance accompanies the training path; outgoing guidance supports the transition toward the labor market or further studies.

These phases are not separate but interconnected, requiring consistent and continuous planning.

The lack of early and effective guidance is one of the main causes of uninformed choices in VET. It is necessary to move beyond episodic models and intervene continuously throughout the entire educational journey.

The project partners shared the need for guidance that is:

- continuous;
- integrated into the curricula;
- active throughout the entire training process.

3.2 Person-Centered Approach and Path Personalization

The person-centered approach places the student at the heart of the guidance process, recognizing their uniqueness, resources, and potential. Path personalization allows for the adaptation of content, methodologies, and timelines to individual needs.

Guidance must recognize the uniqueness of each student by promoting:

- differentiated educational pathways;
- the enhancement of talents and vocations;
- the overcoming of standardized models.

Practicing guidance means putting the student in a position to:

- know themselves;
- recognize their own potential and abilities;

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- build a coherent educational and professional project.
Guidance must therefore be personalized and person-centered, rather than based on selective or remedial logic.

3.3 Narrative Guidance

Narrative guidance uses self-storytelling as a tool for reflection and awareness. Through the narration of experiences, students re-elaborate their journey and assign meaning to the choices they have made.

3.4 The Guidance Competence Audit (Skills Assessment)

The guidance competence audit is a structured process that allows for the identification and enhancement of skills, interests, and aspirations. It is not a static evaluation but a dynamic tool to support decision-making.

3.5 Competence-Based Work and Guidance: A Possible Synergy

Competence-based work and guidance share a vision centered on personal development. Integrating these two approaches makes learning more meaningful and future-oriented.

Guidance is closely connected to competence-based teaching, the audit of skills (hard and soft skills), and the construction of realistic professional goals.

3.6 Education for Choice: Active Tools and Methods

Education for choice aims to develop decision-making skills through active methodologies: problem-solving, simulations, and project work. The goal is to make the student the lead actor in their own journey.

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4. Guidance Tools and Activities

Guidance actions are put into practice through tools and activities that must be integrated into a unified project, consistent with student needs and the local context. The effectiveness of guidance depends not on the quantity of initiatives, but on their educational intentionality, continuity over time, and the ability to trigger student participation.

General Guidance Competencies

These coincide with the key citizenship competencies:

- learning to learn;
- planning/project design;
- communicating;
- collaborating;
- acting autonomously and responsibly;
- problem solving;
- interpreting information.

Specific Guidance Competencies

- Analysis of interests, aptitudes, and skills;
- Evaluation of opportunities and constraints;
- Decision-making ability;
- Planning for the future;
- Monitoring and evaluating one's own path.

European Reference Frameworks

- Agenda 2030;
- LifeComp;
- EntreComp;
- GreenComp;
- Career Management Skills (CMS).

THE GUIDANCE PLAN consists of these design phases:

1. Context analysis and mission definition;
2. Action planning;
3. Implementation;
4. Monitoring and evaluation.

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Methodologies adopted include:

- Narrative guidance;
- Life design;
- "Retravailler" method;
- Competence audit (skills assessment);
- Constructivist approach and empowerment.

Classification of Activities:

- Informative: meetings, data, guides;
- Experiential: School-Work Alternation / Simulated Alternation / Reinforced Alternation, workshops, visits;
- Future Scenarios: disciplinary connections, creativity, vision.

4.1 Individual Interviews and Guidance Counseling

The individual interview represents a fundamental guidance tool, as it offers a protected space for listening and personalized reflection. Through dialogue, the student is accompanied in exploring interests, motivations, expectations, difficulties, and personal resources.

Guidance counseling is not structured as directive advice, but as a process of facilitating choice that values the student's decisional autonomy. The counselor or tutor acts as a guide, asking stimulating questions, helping to clarify goals, and supporting the construction of a realistic and coherent project.

Particular attention should be paid to transition moments, situations of vulnerability, and changes in the educational path, where the interview can prevent the risk of dropout and promote educational well-being.

4.2 Experiential Labs and Educational Guidance Activities

The project promoted transnational cooperation labs as active learning environments based on:

- exchange of best practices;
- co-design;
- integration between physical presence and digital tools.

Experiential labs are a privileged tool for developing guidance skills through doing and reflecting on experience. Simulations, project work, problem-solving activities, Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



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and "reality tasks" allow students to face concrete situations, experimenting with roles, responsibilities, and working methods.

Educational guidance activities, integrated into the curriculum, allow disciplinary learning to be linked to the construction of a personal and professional project. In this way, guidance becomes an integral part of the educational process rather than an episodic intervention.

4.3 Company Visits, Internships, and Professional Testimonials

Direct contact with the world of work is a powerful guidance tool. Company visits and internships allow students to observe real production contexts, understand organizational dynamics, and engage with the skills required by various professions.

Professional testimonials, if properly prepared and reviewed, enrich the knowledge of professions and offer realistic role models. It is essential that these experiences are accompanied by moments of preparation and reflection so that they become opportunities for guidance-based learning rather than simple information events.

4.4 Open Days and Reception Programs

Open days and reception programs play a significant role in the initial guidance phase. They allow students and families to get to know the educational offer, environments, methodologies, and values of the training institution or school.

To be effective, these initiatives must go beyond a simple presentation, providing participatory activities, workshops, and opportunities for discussion. Reception programs, in particular, facilitate student integration, strengthen the sense of belonging, and help build a positive educational climate.

4.5 Skills Portfolio and School Logbook/Diary

The skills portfolio is a documentation and reflection tool that allows the student to collect evidence of acquired skills, experiences gained, and progress made. The school logbook or diary accompanies the portfolio as a space for narration and self-analysis.

These tools support the development of self-awareness, foster self-assessment, and make the personal and professional growth path visible. In the guidance context, the portfolio becomes a dynamic tool for dialogue between student, tutor, and teachers.

4.6 Use of Technologies and Digital Platforms for Guidance

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Digital technologies expand the possibilities for accessing information and personalizing guidance paths. Online platforms, e-portfolios, self-assessment tools, and virtual environments provide flexible and continuous guidance support.

The use of technology must be guided and critical, avoiding passive consumption of information. Digital tools become effective when integrated into an educational project and when they support interaction, reflection, and student autonomy.

5. Roles and Competencies of Guidance Stakeholders

Guidance is a complex process that requires the coordinated involvement of various actors. Clarity of roles and collaboration between the figures involved are essential conditions to ensure effectiveness and consistency.

5.1 The Role of the Counselor and the Tutor

The guidance counselor and the tutor perform a central function in accompanying students. They facilitate decision-making processes, sustain motivation, monitor the student's journey, and foster links between training and the external context.

The required competencies include listening skills, knowledge of educational systems and the labor market, and relational and methodological skills. The counselor acts as a reference figure, promoting the student's autonomy and accountability.

Strengthening the competencies of teachers and trainers is recognized as strategic. They become facilitators of change, capable of integrating guidance, teaching, and accompaniment.

The teacher factor emerges as a decisive element. It is necessary to invest in the training of trainers so that they become:

- agents of change;
- promoters of quality;
- key figures in guidance processes.

The teacher-counselor plays a fundamental role in accompanying students, especially the most vulnerable ones, toward conscious and sustainable choices.

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5.2 Active Involvement of the Class Council

The Class Council, or the training team, has a fundamental role in integrating guidance into teaching. Through shared observation, collegial planning, and systematic discussion, it is possible to build coherent and personalized pathways.

The active involvement of the Class Council helps overcome a sectoral view of guidance, making it an integral part of the overall educational project.

5.3 Family Participation

Families represent a key actor in guidance processes, as they influence students' expectations, motivations, and choices. Their participation must be valued through moments of information, dialogue, and discussion.

Effective guidance promotes the conscious involvement of families, supporting them in understanding the characteristics of VET pathways and in supporting their children without replacing their choices.

5.4 Networking between Schools, Training Centers, Enterprises, and Employment Services

The construction of territorial networks is essential to ensure effective and realistic guidance. Collaboration between schools, training centers, businesses, and employment services allows for the integration of skills, resources, and information.

Networks foster consistency between training and territorial needs, improve transition opportunities, and strengthen the educational value of VET.

The project values an intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach based on cooperation between:

- schools;
- training entities;
- services;
- local communities;
- productive contexts.

5.5 Continuous Training for Guidance Practitioners

The complexity of educational contexts and the labor market requires constant updating of guidance practitioners' skills. Continuous training is indispensable for developing methodological, digital, and relational competencies.

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Investing in the training of practitioners means ensuring quality, innovation, and sustainability for guidance actions.

Stakeholders in the Guidance Process

Internal Stakeholders (School)	External Stakeholders
School Principal (Dirigente scolastico)	Families
Teachers' Assembly (Collegio docenti)	Universities, ITS, AFAM
Class Councils (Consigli di classe)	Businesses and employer associations
Guidance Teacher (Docente orientatore)	Local authorities and employment services
Tutor Teachers (Docenti tutor)	Third Sector (Non-profits)
	Territorial and training networks

Roles of the Guidance Teacher and Tutor Teachers

Guidance Teacher (Docente orientatore)

- Single point of reference for the institute;
- Analysis of education-labor market data (e.g., via the UNICA platform);
- Support for the design and monitoring of pathways;
- Connection with the territory and the world of work.

Tutor Teachers (Docenti tutor)

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- Personalized accompaniment of students;
- Support for the E-portfolio and the "masterpiece" (capolavoro);
- Support in decision-making processes;
- Constant dialogue with families and the guidance teacher.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Improvement of Guidance Actions

Monitoring and evaluation represent fundamental tools to ensure the effectiveness and quality of guidance processes. They allow for the verification of goal achievement, the identification of critical issues, and the direction of continuous improvement.

6.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Indicators

Quantitative indicators include data related to participation, path continuity, and educational and employment outcomes. Qualitative indicators, on the other hand, concern student satisfaction, the perceived utility of activities, and the level of awareness achieved.

The integration of different indicators allows for a more comprehensive and meaningful evaluation.

Skills are not only cognitive but, above all:

- socio-emotional,
- empathetic,
- relational,
- narrative.

Guidance is a life skill. It develops essential competencies for:

- active citizenship,
- democratic participation,
- adaptability to social and economic changes.

6.2 Tools for Measuring Effectiveness

Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, structured observations, and documentary analysis represent useful tools for measuring the effectiveness of guidance actions. It is important that these tools be used systematically and consistently with the project's objectives.

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The effectiveness of guidance is not measured solely by immediate outcomes, but by:

- continuity of pathways,
- perceived well-being,
- the ability to face transitions.

The "infosphere" deeply influences choices, trust, and educational paths. A new critical and semiotic literacy is required. Empathy becomes the key to:

- recovering emotional memory;
- countering algorithmic flattening;
- preserving human specificity over the machine.

6.3 Evaluation of Impact on Students

The 3rd T&C LAB delved into the integration between guidance, continuous monitoring, and path evaluation. The overall goal remains the reduction of the risk of dropout through strategies of:

- prevention;
- intervention;
- compensation.

Impact evaluation focuses on the effects of guidance actions on the development of guidance skills, motivation, well-being, and transition management capacity. Particular attention is given to the most vulnerable students to verify the contribution of guidance to the reduction of inequalities.

A formative and existential guidance:

- reduces dropout and inequalities,
- strengthens human capital,
- supports social cohesion.

6.4 Best Practices and Capitalizing on Experience

The workshops produced significant qualitative results:

- strengthening of transnational cooperation;
- improvement of practitioners' guidance skills;
- countering misinformation and prejudice regarding VET;
- renewal of the educational offer;

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- development of open, dynamic, and sustainable training models.

The collection and dissemination of best practices allow for the enhancement of effective experiences and foster the transfer of innovative solutions. Capitalizing on experience involves the documentation, analysis, and sharing of results within educational networks.

Effective guidance practices are:

- continuous,
- integrated,
- interdisciplinary,
- participatory (families, community, school).

Through transnational workshops (T&C LAB), partners co-designed a common model for initial VET guidance, based on a prospective and project-based approach, the integration of instrumental and existential guidance, and the centrality of the person and their life contexts.

We have experimented with various integrated guidance practices, including:

- experiential and interdisciplinary labs;
- use of expressive methodologies (e.g., theater workshops);
- enhancement of the body, emotions, empathy, and creativity as guidance devices;
- use of digital tools for monitoring and self-reflection.

The project recognizes the teacher/trainer as a key agent of change. Training activities aim to develop:

- advanced guidance skills;
- empathic and relational skills;
- systematic understanding of student needs;
- inclusive educational planning skills.

The effectiveness of actions must be assessed through:

- qualitative and quantitative indicators;
- process observation (engagement, continuity, awareness);
- measurement of medium- and long-term impact, beyond just immediate outcomes.

We found a need for an alliance between:

- school,
- educators,

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- technology,
- community.

The goal is not to identify a profession, but to embrace complexity

6.5 Continuous Improvement Actions

The project defined a transnational training model based on physical mobility (as tested during the 3 international workshops), digital collaboration, hybrid learning environments, and participatory processes for continuous improvement.

The priority objectives pursued are:

- reducing school dropout;
- reducing territorial gaps in education;
- strengthening the quality and equity of the guidance system.

The group work and transnational workshops began with these regulatory and strategic premises, laying the foundations for the construction of a common model for VET guidance that will hopefully be continuously improved.

Continuous improvement is based on using evaluation results to redesign and strengthen guidance actions. Through cycles of planning, implementation, evaluation, and revision, guidance becomes a dynamic and adaptive process.

Re-orienting guidance means:

- overcoming utilitarian logic,
- investing in future planning,
- educating for complexity and uncertainty,
- restoring centrality to the person and the meaning of their own "becoming."

Sustainable future guidance:

- integrates ethics, environmental and technological sustainability, and education;
- builds emotional as well as cognitive maps;
- prepares individuals to live with uncertainty;
- protects the centrality of the human being in the algorithmic-agentic era.

7. Annexes and Operational Materials

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7.1. EXAMPLES OF FORMS FOR THE GUIDANCE AUDIT

(for students aged 13–18 / initial VET)

Form 1 – Initial Narrative Audit (Self, Experience, Expectations)

Objective: To activate self-awareness and initiate the guidance process.

- Section A – Who I am today
 - Three words that describe me:
 - One thing I can do well:
 - One thing that challenges me:
 - When do I feel motivated at school or in training?
- Section B – Significant experiences
 - An experience (academic or extra-curricular) that helped me grow:
 - A moment when I felt lost or in difficulty:
 - Who helped me at that time?
- Section C – Future images
 - When I think about my future, I feel:
 - ☐ curious
 - ☐ confused
 - ☐ confident
 - ☐ worried
 - One thing I would like to learn:
 - One thing I fear I might not be able to do:

Form 2 – Perceived Competencies Audit

Objective: To develop self-reflection and self-assessment.

Area	I recognize in myself	In part	To develop
Teamwork	☐	☐	☐

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Communication	☐	☐	☐
Autonomy	☐	☐	☐
Emotional Management	☐	☐	☐
Problem Solving	☐	☐	☐

•

Reflective Question: Which competency would I like to improve in the coming months and why?

Form 3 – Prospective Guidance Audit

Objective: To connect the present and the future.

- What I would like to remain of me in 3 years:
- What I would like to change about myself:
- A concrete first step I can take right now:

7.2.

PROJECT MODELS FOR GUIDANCE WORKSHOPS

Model A – "Imaging the Future" Workshop

- Duration: 6–8 hours
- Target: VET students / lower and upper secondary school
- Objectives:
 1. Develop anticipation and planning skills

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2. Strengthen motivation and the sense of possibility
 3. Counter stereotypical visions of the future
- Main Activities:
 1. Narrative stimulus (video, story, testimonial)
 2. Guided visualization exercise
 3. Creative production (writing, drawing, map)
 4. Small group sharing
 5. Guided reflection
 - Output:

Personal future map;

Narrative traces for the portfolio.

Model B – Body–Emotions–Guidance Workshop (Theatre-based)

- Duration: 8–12 hours
- Approach: Expressive-corporeal
- Objectives:

Work on trust, empathy, and relationships;

Explore identity and roles;

Develop socio-emotional skills.

- Activities:

Presence exercises;

Role-playing and improvisation;

Symbolic representation of choices and obstacles;

Reflective debriefing.

- Guidance Value: The body becomes a space for awareness and decision-making.

Model C – Guidance and Work Workshop

- Duration: 6 hours

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- Objectives: Understand the world of work without stereotypes;
- Link personal skills to professional contexts.
- Activities:

Analysis of real cases;

Meeting with witnesses (professionals);

Skills self-assessment;

Designing a personal mini-path.

7.3.

OBSERVATION GRIDS FOR TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

Grid 1 – Socio-emotional Competencies

Competency	Observable Indicators	Low	Medium	High
Empathy	Listens and recognizes the other	☐	☐	☐
Self-regulation	Manages emotions and frustration	☐	☐	☐
Trust	Self-exposure and participation	☐	☐	☐

Grid 2 – Guidance Competencies

Competency	Indicators	Emerging	In Development	Consolidated

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Self-awareness	Recognizes strengths	☐	☐	☐
Planning	Formulates future hypotheses	☐	☐	☐
Decision making	Arguments their choices	☐	☐	☐

Grid 3 – Active Citizenship Competencies

- Participation: Intervenes, collaborates.
- Responsibility: Respects roles and timelines.
- Inclusion: Welcomes differences.

7.4 FORMAT FOR THE GUIDANCE PORTFOLIO

(Digital or paper – longitudinal approach)

1. Who I am:

Personal profile,

Interests,

Values.

2. My Journey:

Academic and training experiences,

Workshop activities,

Internships,

Alternation (Work-based learning),

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extra-curricular experiences.

3. My Competencies:

Transversal skills,

Technical-professional skills,

Evidence (testimonials, products).

4. Reflexivity:

What I learned about myself,

what challenged me,

how I overcame obstacles.

5. Future Project:

Pathway hypotheses,

short/medium-term goals,

concrete actions.

6. Feedback and Accompaniment:

Observations from teachers/trainers,

periodic self-assessments,

project revision.

7.5. Bibliography and Sitography

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3. Guidance as an educational process and personalization: CEDEFOP (2009); ELGPN Guidelines (2015); Career Management Skills frameworks .
4. Guidance, digital, cyberspace, and algo-ethics: Floridi (2014) *The Fourth Revolution* (key reference for infosphere and ethics); Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027; DigCompEdu .
5. Inclusion, school dropout, and equal opportunities: European Commission and OECD papers on reducing early school leaving and pathways to success .
6. Evaluation, monitoring, and quality of guidance systems: ELGPN (2010); CEDEFOP (2015) .
7. Useful references for Erasmus+ (impact and sustainability): Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021–2027; Impact assessment guidelines .

European Added Value & Sustainability

European Added Value

The project generates clear European added value by addressing common challenges faced across European education and training systems in the field of guidance and orientation within leFP/VET pathways. These challenges include early school leaving, skills mismatch, limited permeability between education and training pathways, and unequal access to guidance services.

The European dimension of the project is reflected in the transnational cooperation among partner organisations, which enables the comparison of different national approaches to guidance, the identification of shared principles, and the development of a common methodological framework that is adaptable to diverse educational contexts. This cooperation allows partners to move beyond isolated national solutions and to co-create transferable models and tools aligned with European lifelong guidance policies.

The project is strongly aligned with European priorities, including:

- the promotion of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance;
- the strengthening of Vocational Education and Training (VET/leFP) as an attractive and inclusive pathway;
- the development of key competences, transversal skills and career management skills;
- the enhancement of social inclusion and equal opportunities;
- the reinforcement of education–training–labour market links.

By focusing on guidance as a continuous educational process and by integrating competence-based, learner-centred and inclusive approaches, the project contributes to the implementation of European policy frameworks such as the European Education Area, the Council Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance, and the VET policy agenda.

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Furthermore, the project promotes mutual learning and capacity building among partner organisations. Professionals involved in guidance, teaching and training benefit from the exchange of practices, tools and methodologies, leading to improved competences and a shared European understanding of quality guidance provision.

Sustainability

Sustainability has been a guiding principle throughout the project design and implementation. The project results are conceived to have a long-term impact beyond the project lifetime, ensuring continued use, adaptation and development at local, regional and national levels.

Sustainability is ensured through several complementary strategies:

Institutional Sustainability

The developed methodological framework and tools are designed to be embedded within existing organisational practices of partner institutions, including schools, VET providers and guidance services. This integration supports the continued application of the project results without requiring additional resources.

Pedagogical and Professional Sustainability

The project strengthens the competences of guidance practitioners, teachers and tutors through shared methodologies and reflective practices. This investment in human capital ensures that the knowledge and skills developed during the project remain within organisations and continue to influence guidance practices over time.

Transferability and Adaptability

All outputs are designed to be modular, flexible and transferable, allowing adaptation to different national systems, target groups and institutional settings. This facilitates replication by other organisations and supports scalability at European level.

Network Sustainability

The project fosters durable cooperation among partners and with external stakeholders, including enterprises, training providers and labour market services. These networks create the conditions for continued collaboration, joint initiatives and future European projects.

Open Access and Dissemination

Project results are made available through open-access digital channels, ensuring broad visibility and accessibility. This approach supports dissemination, uptake by external stakeholders and long-term exploitation of the outputs.

Through these sustainability measures, the project contributes to strengthening European guidance systems and supports learners in navigating education, training and employment pathways in a rapidly changing social and economic context.

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