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Mentoring Program for Career Counselors for NEET Activation



Mentoring Program for Career Counselors

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SUMMARY

The mentoring program for career counselors is part of the European project “Career eMerge: Integration of digital career guidance with professional development”, implemented jointly by Portugal and Poland, with the aim of strengthening the competencies of career counselors working with NEET youth (young people not in education, employment, or training).

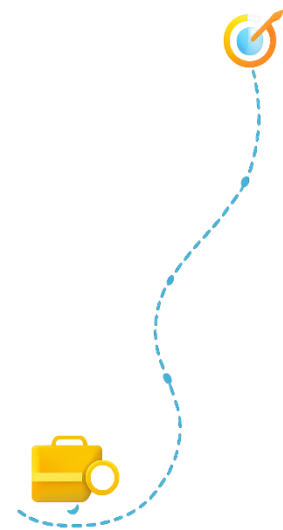
This handbook presents an innovative pedagogical approach based on six practical and reflective training modules that integrate self-awareness, interpersonal skills, psychological support, and digital competencies.

The document serves as an informational and practical guide for career counselors, trainers, and employment specialists. It can be used both in face-to-face and online settings.

The program is designed to:

- strengthen the capacity of career counselors to support NEET youth;
- develop sustainable mentoring and career guidance methodologies;
- promote social inclusion, emotional well-being, and digital employability.

The handbook complements the digital tool Career eMerge Online, together forming the European Mentoring and Career Guidance Toolkit for career counselors working with NEET youth.





1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Context

The career counselors' mentoring program is part of the Career eMerge project, funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ KA210-VET programme – Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training, contract number 2023-2-PL01-KA210-VET-000171223.

The project is the result of a partnership between the Foundation for Development and Innovation WIR (Poland) and AESS – Associação de Educação Social e Solidária (Portugal), aimed at developing innovative tools and methodologies for career guidance targeted at young people in vulnerable situations, specifically the NEET group (Not in Education, Employment, or Training – young people who are not studying, working, or participating in training).

The joint work of career counselors from Poland and Portugal on the development of project tools enabled the exchange of experiences, perspectives, and good practices in supporting NEET youth. This international cooperation made it possible to combine different approaches to career guidance, taking into account both the educational and socio-cultural contexts of the two countries.

The tools developed within the project are the result of collaborative efforts by the Polish and Portuguese teams and were designed with practical application in mind for the daily work of career counselors. In the future, these tools will support counselors in diagnosing the needs of NEET youth, planning individualized development pathways, and strengthening the competencies necessary to enter the labor market or return to education.

International cooperation also contributed to improving the quality of the developed solutions through testing, analysis, and adaptation to different realities of working with young people. As a result, the tools are universal, flexible, and can be used both in Poland and Portugal, as well as adapted for use in other European countries.

1.2 Definition of the NEET Problem

The NEET phenomenon (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) constitutes a cross-cutting challenge for European countries. It refers to young people who are not working, not studying, and not participating in any form of training, and who therefore remain outside the main systems of education and the labor market. Young people who leave education early or experience difficulties with labor market integration tend to distance themselves from formal institutions, which in the long term negatively affects both social cohesion and economic development.





According to Eurostat data, in 2023 the average NEET rate in the European Union was 12.4%, meaning that more than one in ten young people aged 15–29 were outside education, employment, and training. In the same year, the rate was approximately 9.5% in Portugal and 10.1% in Poland. These figures confirm that although the scale of the phenomenon varies across Member States, the NEET problem remains significant even in countries with relatively stable labor market conditions. Despite different socio-economic contexts, the factors contributing to the NEET phenomenon in Poland and Portugal are largely similar. These include, among others, low self-esteem among young people, insufficient vocational skills, lack of motivation to engage in educational or professional activities, limited social support networks, and emotional difficulties, which often lead to withdrawal from further attempts at labor market integration.

In view of these conditions, the role of the career counselor becomes particularly important. The counselor acts as a mediator between young people and the worlds of education and work, supporting them in the processes of self-awareness, identification of competencies, career planning, and connecting with available development opportunities. Effective career guidance, based on an individualized approach and appropriate tools, can be a key element in counteracting the NEET phenomenon and supporting the sustainable activation of young people.

1.3 Objectives of the Mentoring Program

The mentoring program for career counselors aims to adapt vocational education and training to the needs of the labor market.

Specific objectives include:

- supporting the development of self-assessment, diagnosis, and career planning skills;
- equipping career counselors with tools that enable teaching active job search techniques;
- strengthening interpersonal, communication, and emotional skills;
- integrating psychological support and stress management practices into the guidance process;
- ensuring competencies in career counseling and in preparing effective job applications;
- introducing a digital tool that facilitates individual monitoring and follow-up activities.

The program also aims to create an international community of career counselors that will serve as a platform for the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and good practices in working with NEET youth. This community is intended to foster mutual learning, enabling counselors from different European countries to become familiar with diverse approaches, tools, and solutions used in career guidance across various socio-cultural and institutional contexts.

Building an international community of practitioners allows theoretical experiences to be confronted with practice, supports the development of counselors' professional competencies, and contributes



to improving the quality of career guidance services. Regular contact, cooperation, and dialogue among counselors encourage reflection on the effectiveness of applied methods and support the adaptation of developed tools to changing youth needs and local conditions.

An important element of this community is also ensuring the sustainability of the developed methodology. Thanks to the involvement of counselors from different countries, the methodology does not remain merely a project outcome but becomes a living tool that can continue to be developed, tested, and refined even after project funding ends. Shared responsibility for the development and updating of tools strengthens their usefulness and increases their potential for long-term application in the daily work of career counselors.

The international community of career counselors also facilitates the dissemination of project results, increasing their reach and impact on career guidance practice at the European level. Transnational cooperation enables a more effective response to challenges related to the activation of NEET youth and supports the development of coherent, innovative, and sustainable solutions in the field of career guidance in Europe.

1.4 Handbook Structure

The handbook is divided into six main modules, corresponding to the key areas of intervention for career counselors working with NEET youth:

1. Self-assessment and career planning for NEET youth.
2. Job search skills.
3. Interpersonal skills (soft skills).
4. Psychological support and stress management.
5. Career guidance and preparation of application documents.
6. Digital tools and evaluation.

Each module includes:

- a concise theoretical introduction;
- learning objectives;
- tools and guidelines for practical application;
- exercises and training activities;
- suggestions for assessment and follow-up actions.

The handbook has been developed as an open-source resource for career counselors and can be used in both formal contexts (vocational schools, IEF, non-governmental organizations) and informal contexts (career guidance, mentoring, coaching, reintegration programs)..

1.5 Career eMerge Online Tool

This handbook has been designed to work in conjunction with the Career eMerge online tool,



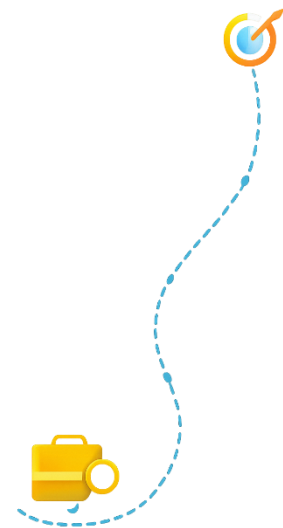


developed as part of the same project.

While the handbook provides the theoretical and methodological framework, the online tool offers:

- interactive resources (tests, forms);
- automated self-assessment grids;
- digital access to the Individual Action Plan (IAP);
- a collaborative space for counselors and young people.

This integration ensures flexibility, a hybrid approach, and accessibility of the mentoring process, supporting career counselors in various contexts of working with NEET youth. The Career eMerge online tool strengthens the European dimension of the project by promoting transnational sharing of career guidance methods and increasing the employability opportunities of NEETs.





2. PROGRAM METHODOLOGY

2.1 Assumptions

The methodology is based on three core pillars:

1. Active learning – the mentor learns through practice, reflection, and sharing real-life experiences drawn from working with NEET youth.
2. Personalized mentoring – each career counselor works within a transnational team, creating real opportunities for the exchange of experiences, perspectives, and good practices. This form of cooperation supports the targeted development of both professional and emotional competencies essential for effective work with NEET youth, while also encouraging reflection on the methods and guidance tools used.
3. Integrated approach – combines psychological, educational, and vocational dimensions, integrating digital tools with personal skills.

2.2 Pedagogical Structure

The program is based on a modular logic of development, starting with diagnosis and career planning and progressing toward the vocational integration of individuals belonging to the NEET group.

Each module includes:

- learning objectives;
- structured content (concepts, tools, practices);
- practical activities (simulations, group dynamics, case studies);
- assessment tools (self-assessment, mentor feedback, and progress indicators).

The activities are delivered in a blended learning format, combining self-directed learning with participation in online training, using an interactive digital platform.

2.3 Evaluation and Expected Outcomes

Assessment is continuous and formative in nature, focusing on the development of skills rather than solely on the acquisition of knowledge by career counselors.

The expected outcomes include:

- better preparation of career counselors to support NEET youth;
- improvement in the quality and innovativeness of career guidance services;
- integration of the developed tools in schools, employment centers, and training institutions;
- establishment of a School of Career Guidance Trainers within partner organizations, ensuring the sustainability of the project.

2.4 Ethical Principles of Mentoring





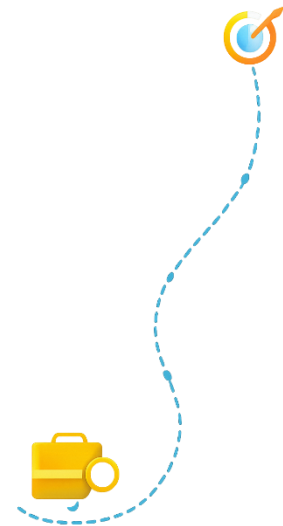
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The mentoring process is based on the following ethical principles:

- confidentiality and respect for the individuality of each young person;
- empathy and active listening;
- inclusion, gender equality, and non-discrimination;
- promotion of autonomy and empowerment.

Methodology summary:

“Learn, guide, and transform” is the guiding idea of the Career eMerge program, which strengthens the role of the career counselor as an agent of change. The counselor actively supports NEET youth in the transition toward further education, employment, and fuller participation in social life.





MODULE 1 – SELF-ASSESSMENT AND CAREER PLANNING

Authors: Vanda Santos, Tomasz Magnowski

1. Introduction

Self-assessment is the starting point of every career guidance process. Before young people make career choices, they need to better understand themselves — who they are, what matters to them, what their strengths are, and in which areas they see opportunities for further development.

In the case of NEET youth (those outside education, employment, and training), this process becomes particularly important. Many young people experience reduced self-confidence, lack of motivation, or a sense of purpose. The role of the career counselor is to support them in rebuilding the relationship between identity, motivation, and their vision of the future, as well as helping them rediscover their own potential.

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Peter Drucker

Self-assessment and career planning make it possible to transform doubts into concrete actions, dreams into realistic plans, and plans into measurable outcomes, leading to active and conscious shaping of one’s professional path.

2. Module Objectives

The main objective is to enable career counselors to conduct self-assessment and career planning sessions with NEET youth using practical tools and participatory methods.

Specific objectives include:

- promoting self-awareness among young people through personal diagnostic techniques;
- developing the ability to set realistic and achievable goals;
- teaching how to develop and monitor an Individual Action Plan (IAP);
- stimulating motivation and a sense of purpose;
- strengthening the role of the career counselor as a facilitator rather than a decision-maker.



3. Structure and Methodology of the Module

The module combines moments of individual reflection, practical exercises, and group activities. The methodology is based on four phases:

1. **Discovering who I am** – understanding personal and professional identity.
2. **Becoming aware of what I know and can do** – mapping skills and resources.
3. **Defining where I want to go** – setting goals and tasks.
4. **Developing an action plan** – defining actions, timelines, and strategies.

The career counselor acts as a mirror, helping the young person see their potential through “new” eyes.

4. Diagnostic Tools

A career counselor may use various tools to facilitate reflection and information gathering by NEET youth:

1. Vocational Interests Test – RIASEC Model

The vocational interests test based on the RIASEC model makes it possible to identify dominant areas of interest and vocational preferences among young people. The model distinguishes six personality and work environment types: **Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C).**

Using the RIASEC test in work with NEET youth allows the career counselor to better understand a participant’s natural predispositions, motivations, and preferred style of action. The test results serve as a starting point for career guidance discussions, support the self-assessment process, and help match potential educational and career pathways to individual interests, rather than solely to available offers or external pressure.

The vocational preference model describes six main types, whose initial letters in English form the acronym RIASEC:

- **Realistic** – prefers practical and manual activities;
- **Investigative** – enjoys solving problems and exploring ideas;
- **Artistic** – values creativity and self-expression;
- **Social** – enjoys helping others and communicating;
- **Enterprising** – likes leading and influencing others;
- **Conventional** – prefers order, structure, and attention to detail.

2. Personal SWOT Analysis

A personal SWOT analysis is a tool for in-depth self-assessment that helps a young person better understand their current situation, potential, and barriers in the context of career planning. This method enables a structured and realistic self-view, without judgment, while



maintaining a future-oriented perspective. As part of the exercise, the participant analyzes four areas:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Skills, talents, and experiences	Limitations, negative habits	Market trends, networking	External factors, lack of support

3. Career Path

The “Career Path” exercise aims to make young people aware that their previous experiences—educational, professional, and life-related—have value and significance in the process of planning the future. Even if the path has been discontinuous or different from expectations, each stage carries specific competencies, insights, and resources.

As part of the exercise, the young person draws a timeline on which they mark the most important moments of their life, such as:

- periods of education (school, courses, studies),
- professional experiences (jobs, internships, traineeships),
- significant life events (volunteering, projects, breaks, changes).

Next, individually or in small groups, participants analyze the different stages of their path, reflecting on:

- what they learned during a given period,
- which skills they developed (including informal skills),
- what motivated them,
- which experiences were satisfying and which were challenging.

A key element of the exercise is reflection on the future, during which the young person defines:

- what they would like to repeat in their further journey,
- which experiences they would like to give up or change,
- which elements of their history they can use when planning further educational or career steps.

The role of the career counselor is to:

- support the participant in safe and open reflection,
- help identify competencies hidden within experiences,
- strengthen a sense of agency and continuity of development,
- connect conclusions from the exercise with possible career paths and further actions.

The “Career Path” exercise supports the building of a positive narrative about one’s own



development, helps organize experiences, and reinforces the belief that even difficult moments can become a starting point for conscious future planning.

4. Career Wheel

The “Career Wheel” is a tool for a holistic assessment of life and career satisfaction, allowing participants to view their situation in a structured and visual way. The exercise highlights that professional development is closely linked to other areas of life, such as health, relationships, and psychological well-being.

As part of the exercise, participants receive a wheel diagram divided into several areas, including:

- professional career,
- education and skills development,
- financial situation,
- physical and mental health,
- social and family relationships,
- rest and work–life balance,
- sense of purpose and meaning.

Participants then assess their level of satisfaction in each area on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents very low satisfaction and 10 represents full satisfaction. These ratings are marked on the wheel, creating a visual representation of the participant’s current life situation.

The next stage involves analyzing the results, during which the participant:

- identifies areas requiring improvement,
- reflects on the causes of low satisfaction,
- recognizes areas that serve as resources and sources of energy,
- determines which areas have the greatest impact on motivation and readiness to act.

Based on this analysis, with the support of a career counselor, the participant sets development priorities and selects one or two areas to focus on in the near future. The exercise does not aim to improve all life domains at once, but rather to plan changes consciously and realistically, step by step.

The role of the career counselor is to:

- create a safe space for reflection,
- help interpret the results,
- support the participant in translating insights into concrete actions,
- link selected areas with the career plan and available forms of support (e.g., training, mentoring, micro-credentials).

The “Career Wheel” helps NEET youth understand that change in one area can positively influence others and that career development is a holistic process requiring balance and attention to personal needs.



5. Goal Setting

A goal is useful only when it is specific and achievable. The career counselor should teach the young person to use the **SMART model** when formulating goals:

Criterion	Description	Example
S – Specific	What do I want to achieve?	“To obtain an internship in the administrative department.”
M – Measurable	How will I know I have succeeded?	“Submit 10 job applications and receive 2 interview invitations.”
A – Achievable	Do I have the necessary resources and skills?	“I have training and the support of a career counselor.”
R – Relevant	Does this goal make sense in the context of my future?	“Gaining experience helps me enter the labor market.”
T – Time-bound	By when?	“By the end of the next quarter.”

The career counselor helps the young person transform vague desires (“I want to find a job”) into concrete and achievable goals (“I want to apply for three positions per week”).

Individual Action Plan (IAP)

The **Individual Action Plan (IAP)** is a central document in the mentoring process. It enables the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of a NEET young person’s progress.

Recommended structure:

Goal	Action	Deadline	Responsible	Success indicator
Improve and submit application documents	Revise the CV according to the adopted template	1 week	Young person (NEET) + career counselor	Revised CV submitted
Identify available education options	Search for available courses	2 weeks	Young person (NEET)	List of 3 courses
Improve communication effectiveness	Participate in a training course	1 month	Young person (NEET)	Certificate obtained



As a document containing personal data, the Individual Action Plan should be processed with particular care and updated regularly to reflect the current situation of the individual concerned, as well as to remain aligned with changing labor market requirements and employer expectations.

6. Practical Exercises

Exercise 1 – “Who Am I?”

The career counselor invites the young person (NEET) to engage in written reflection:

- Describe yourself in three words and explain why you chose them.
- What motivates you to get up every day?
- What would you like to achieve in five years?

Objective: to promote self-awareness and personal expression.

Exercise 2 – “My Skills Map”

The participant lists their technical skills (e.g., computer literacy, foreign languages, time management) and interpersonal skills (e.g., empathy, resilience, teamwork). They then rate each skill on a scale from 1 to 5.

Tip: to make the exercise more dynamic, the career counselor can use colorful sticky notes.

Exercise 3 – “From Idea to Action”

Based on the Individual Action Plan (IAP), the young person selects one goal and writes down the first three concrete actions they will take.

Example:

1. Update their CV.
2. Contact two companies.
3. Register for an online training course.

7. Space for Reflection

What have I learned about opportunities for improving myself as a career counselor?

- What skills should I develop to more effectively support a young person in identifying their strengths?
- What skills should I develop to more effectively support a young person in identifying areas for further development?
- What skills should I develop to more effectively support a young person in defining



the next steps they will take?

(Space for the mentor–career counselor to record personal reflections.)

8. Practical Suggestions for the Mentor – Career Counselor

- Create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Acknowledge feelings of doubt and uncertainty.
- Ask open-ended questions (e.g., “How did you feel in that situation?”).
- Avoid judgment – every journey is unique.
- Recognize small wins and reinforce progress.
- When appropriate, involve family or support networks.
- Use simple and positive language.

“A good career counselor does not show the participant the path, but helps them define their own.”

9. Module Evaluation

Self-Assessment of the Mentor – Career Counselor

Competency	Before the module	After the module	Evidence
I know how to support a NEET individual in identifying their strengths and weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a NEET individual in clearly formulating goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a NEET individual in developing and implementing an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



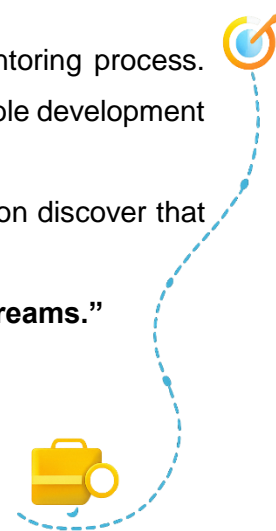
10. Conclusions

Self-assessment and career planning form the foundation of the entire mentoring process. When young people understand their strengths and are able to visualize possible development pathways, they awaken an inner motivation that leads to change.

The role of the career counselor is to cast that light—to help the young person discover that the future is a project built step by step.

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

Eleanor Roosevelt



MODULE 2 – JOB SEARCH SKILLS

Authors: Angelo Batista, Paulina Zajac

1. Introduction

Job searching is one of the key stages on the path to the vocational activation of NEET youth, and at the same time one of the most demanding and emotionally challenging processes. For many young people, contact with the labor market is associated with fear, uncertainty, and previous experiences of rejection, which can significantly reduce motivation and self-esteem. The module **“Job Search Skills Training”** was designed to support career counselors in guiding NEET youth through this process in a safe, gradual, and individually tailored manner. Its aim is not only to provide practical knowledge about the labor market and recruitment tools, but also to strengthen psychosocial competencies that are essential for active and persistent job searching.

The module places particular emphasis on:

- building a sense of agency and responsibility for one’s own decisions;
- developing self-presentation and communication skills;
- normalizing difficulties and failures that occur during the recruitment process;
- teaching systematic and realistic planning of actions.

The role of the career counselor in this module goes beyond that of an instructor. The counselor becomes a companion in the process, helping the young person understand labor market mechanisms, identify their own competencies, and translate them into concrete actions. As a result, job searching ceases to be a source of frustration and becomes a process



of learning, growth, and building a professional future.

The module can be delivered both in individual and workshop formats, and its flexible structure allows the pace and scope of activities to be adapted to the abilities and readiness of NEET youth.

2. Module Objectives

The main objective of the module is to strengthen the ability of NEET youth to search for employment effectively, consciously, and independently by developing practical, communication, and psychosocial competencies, while simultaneously supporting career counselors in delivering an individualized and tailored vocational activation process.

Specific objectives of the module

The module pursues the following specific objectives:

- 1. Increasing NEET youth's knowledge of the labor market**
– by familiarizing participants with current labor market realities, forms of employment, and pathways to entering the labor market.
- 2. Developing effective job search skills**
– by teaching the use of various job vacancy sources, including digital tools and networking.
- 3. Strengthening competencies in preparing application documents**
– by developing skills in creating CVs and cover letters tailored to specific job offers.
- 4. Developing self-presentation and communication skills in the recruitment process**
– through interview preparation, simulations, and practical exercises.
- 5. Building psychological resilience and motivation during the job search process**
– by normalizing difficult experiences, strengthening a sense of agency, and learning how to cope with rejection and stress.
- 6. Developing planning and systematic action skills**
– by supporting participants in creating realistic job search plans and monitoring progress.
- 7. Supporting an individualized approach to vocational activation**
– by adapting activities to the needs, capabilities, and readiness of the young person, taking into account their life situation.



3. Structure and Methodology

The module combines theoretical and practical learning through:

- participatory sessions with the exchange of experiences;
- simulations of real-life job search situations;
- case studies and group exercises;
- gradual development of a personal job search plan.

This methodology is based on the following cycle:

situation analysis → **action planning** → **implementation** → **reflection and improvement.**



4. Understanding the Labor Market

Before starting the job search, it is essential to understand the context. The career counselor should help the young person to:

- identify sectors with labor demand, such as technology, tourism, healthcare, services, or the green economy;
- explore job portals (IEFP, NetEmpregos, Expresso Emprego, EURES, LinkedIn, pracuj.pl, olx.pl);
- recognize their personal and professional networks, as some employment opportunities arise outside official job posting channels;
- understand basic employment rights and obligations (employment contracts, internships, vocational training).

The ability to search for job opportunities is the first step toward conscious and stable employment.

5. Job Search Tools

Effective job searching requires not only motivation from young people but also skills that can be developed and improved through well-chosen tools and training. In the context of working with NEET individuals, it is crucial to use practical, engaging methods that can be immediately applied in everyday professional and personal life.

1. Workshops on Creating Professional Application Documents

Practical sessions in which participants:

- learn the principles of creating CVs and cover letters that meet labor market standards;





- learn how to tailor documents to specific job offers and professional profiles;
- work on using a benefits-oriented language and presenting their experiences effectively;
- receive individual feedback and corrections.

Such workshops increase young people's confidence in presenting their own potential.

2. Training in Online Job Search Techniques

Within the module, participants learn:

- how to navigate recruitment platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Indeed, Pracuj.pl);
- how to create and optimize professional profiles;
- how to use job filters and alerts;
- how to respond to job advertisements electronically.

This training enables individuals who have had little or no prior contact with digital recruitment tools to gain practical job search skills.

3. Job Interview Simulations and Training

This training component provides young people with a safe environment to:

- conduct mock interviews with a counselor or trainer;
- analyze frequently asked recruitment questions;
- practice self-presentation, body language, and responses to difficult questions;
- receive feedback after each simulation.

Regular practice helps reduce stress, enhance interpersonal competencies, and build confidence in interactions with potential employers.

4. Self-Assessment and Application Planning Tools

Available tools include:

- competency and work style tests;
- vocational aptitude questionnaires;
- analyses of strengths and interests (e.g., the RIASEC model);
- job search plan templates (action lists, activity schedules).

These tools support young people in understanding their capabilities and planning realistic career goals.

5. Coaching and Mentoring Programs

As part of longer-term cooperation, the counselor may:

- conduct regular coaching and mentoring sessions with a NEET individual;
- monitor outcomes and adjust the job search plan as needed;
- model assertive communication skills, coping with rejection, and rebuilding motivation.

These programs are individualized and support participants through the real job search process.

6. Support Groups and Peer Learning



For young people, a sense of community and support is important. Support groups enable:

- the exchange of experiences with peers;
- modeling of behaviors and positive action patterns;
- joint job searching and practicing application skills.

Peer learning increases motivation and a sense of agency.

6. Practical Exercises

Exercise 1 – “Opportunity Map”

The young person identifies five companies or institutions that interest them and analyzes them in terms of their activity profile, requirements, values, desired competencies, and possible contacts. The career counselor supports the participant in organizing the information and transforming it into a concrete action plan.

Objective: to develop skills in analyzing the labor market, comparing job opportunities, and translating information into practical career steps.

Exercise 2 – “From Information to Application”

The young person selects one company from the “Opportunity Map” and prepares a preliminary application (CV or a short application message) tailored to the selected position. The career counselor helps identify key competencies and adapt the content to employer expectations.

Objective: to develop application skills, match competencies to job offers, and build readiness to contact employers.

Exercise 3 – “My Professional Story in 60 Seconds”

The young person prepares a short self-presentation, no longer than 60 seconds, in which they present their interests, key skills (including informal ones), and the area in which they would like to develop or seek employment. The career counselor supports the participant in structuring the content and provides feedback.

Objective: to develop self-presentation and communication skills and build confidence in professional interactions.

7. Space for Reflection

What have I learned about opportunities for improving myself as a career counselor in supporting NEET youth in job searching?



- What skills should I develop to more effectively support a young person in the job search process?
- What major difficulties might a young person encounter, and how can they be addressed?
- What commitments should the young person undertake in the coming weeks?

(Space reserved for notes and individual reflections.)

8. Self-Assessment of the Mentor – Career Counselor

Competency	Before the module	After the module	Evidence
I know how to support a NEET individual in recognizing job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a NEET individual in creating a clear and professional CV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a NEET individual in writing an effective cover letter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a NEET individual in preparing for a job interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a NEET individual in maintaining perseverance and motivation during the job search	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

9. Practical Suggestions for the Career Counselor

Encouraging autonomy: the career counselor provides guidance, but it is the young person who takes action.

A simple tool for structuring responses (STAR method):

- **S – Situation:** describing the context, e.g., where you worked, what was happening,



and what situation required action;

- **T – Task:** explaining your task or objective—what you were responsible for and what you needed to achieve;
- **A – Action:** presenting the specific steps taken by the young person—what you did, how you did it, which methods and strategies you used;
- **R – Result:** showing the outcome—results, numbers, improvements, conclusions, and what you learned.

Example of a sample question:

“Tell me about a situation in which you had to solve a problem.”

The young person responds:

“During an internship, I noticed an error in the reports (**S**). I corrected the database (**A**), shared it with the team (**T**), and we managed to deliver it on time (**R**).”

10. Conclusions

Success in job searching depends less on luck and more on preparation. Every young person has the potential to chart their own path, provided they learn how to plan, communicate, and believe in themselves.

The career counselor acts as a mediator in this discovery—someone who transforms uncertainty into strategy and hope into concrete action.

“There is no ready-made path; there are paths that are created by walking (that is, by acting).”





MODULE 3 – INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (SOFT SKILLS)

Authors: Dulce Forte, Jacek Kowalski

1. Introduction

In the labor market, interpersonal skills are increasingly valued—skills that are learned not only through training, but also through human relationships, through the way we communicate, cooperate, and solve problems.

For NEET youth, who have often experienced rejection, lack of motivation, or social isolation, developing these skills is essential for rebuilding self-confidence and a sense of self-worth.

Soft skills are the “invisible cement” of a career: they connect technical knowledge with attitude.

Without them, employability is incomplete.

Companies hire employees based on their CVs, but retain talent because of attitude.

In this module, career counselors learn how to identify, develop, and strengthen these skills in young people, promoting positive and cooperative behaviors.

2. Module Objectives

The main objective is to enable career counselors to develop interpersonal skills in their work with NEET youth, including strengthening communication, empathy, teamwork, responsibility, and resilience.

Specific objectives include:

- promoting the development of self-awareness and emotional management among young people;
- developing assertive communication and active listening skills;
- encouraging teamwork and cooperation;
- teaching NEET youth time management and problem-solving strategies;
- fostering resilience and a growth-oriented mindset.

3. Structure and Methodology

The module adopts an experiential approach based on active learning (learning by doing). Sessions conducted by career counselors with NEET youth should be participatory in nature and focus on personal reflection and group practice.

Recommended steps:

- initial assessment of NEET youths’ interpersonal skills;
- thematic sessions on communication, cooperation, and emotional management;



- simulation exercises and guided reflection;
- directing activities toward the development of a personal development plan.

4. Key Interpersonal Skills

1. Effective Communication

Communication skills are more than just speaking—they are about understanding and being understood. The career counselor should work with the young person on the following aspects:

- clarity in expressing ideas and thoughts;
- active listening (listening to understand, not just to respond);
- non-verbal communication (understanding the meaning of gestures, tone of voice, posture);
- constructive feedback (expressing and receiving opinions in a respectful manner).

Tip: It is recommended to use the “mirror reflection” exercise, in which participants imitate another person’s facial expressions and emotions. This activity strengthens empathy and the conscious use of non-verbal communication.

2. Teamwork

Teamwork is one of the most valued skills in organizations. Many young people from the NEET group have experienced isolation or a loss of trust. The career counselor should create group experiences that strengthen:

- cooperation and mutual support;
- recognition of each person’s role within the group;
- the ability to cope with differing opinions;
- engagement in achieving common goals.

“Teamwork means combining differences to multiply results.”

3. Time Management and Personal Organization

Time management is life management. Young people should learn how to plan their day, set priorities, and avoid procrastination—constantly postponing tasks. Useful tools include:

- **Eisenhower Matrix:** helps quickly decide which tasks are most important and which can be postponed;
- **Pomodoro Technique:** working for 25 minutes followed by a short 5-minute break to maintain focus;
- **Weekly schedule:** allows tasks to be planned for the entire week and progress to be tracked on an ongoing basis.

4. Problem Solving and Critical Thinking



Effective problem solving is based on the ability to analyze problems and create realistic, actionable solutions.

The career counselor may use the **IDEAL model**, which guides individuals through successive stages of problem solving:

- **I** – Identify the problem;
- **D** – Define the goal;
- **E** – Explore possible solutions;
- **A** – Act;
- **L** – Learn from the experience for the future.

Example:

Problem: A lack of motivation to look for a job among a young NEET individual.

Solution: Teach them how to set weekly goals and find an accountability partner.

5. Resilience and Emotional Management

- Psychological resilience is the ability to adapt and grow in the face of difficulties. Career counselors can help young people recognize emotions and develop coping strategies, such as: relaxation and breathing techniques;
- reflective writing or keeping an emotional journal;
- positive reinforcement and self-compassion;
- identifying support networks (family, friends, mentors).

“Falling is inevitable; getting up is a choice and a learning experience.”

5. Practical Exercises

Exercise 1 – “Communication Game”

Participants work in pairs: one person describes an image or object without showing it, while the other tries to draw it based solely on the instructions heard.

Objective: to develop active listening skills and clear, precise communication.

Exercise 2 – “My Work Style”

Participants receive descriptions of different team roles (e.g., leader, creator, organizer, supporter) and choose the profile that best matches their natural way of working.

Objective: to develop awareness of one’s role within a team and understand how different styles can complement each other.

Exercise 3 – “Solution Challenge”

Participants work in teams to analyze a given problem (e.g., “a colleague does not meet deadlines”) and develop possible solutions, then select and justify the most effective option.

Objective: to develop critical thinking and teamwork skills in searching for creative problem-solving solutions.



Exercise 4 – “Resilience Line”

Participants mark difficult or challenging moments from their lives on a timeline and write down what each situation taught them; if they wish, they then share their reflections with the group.

Objective: to strengthen awareness of personal resilience and appreciation of individual achievements in overcoming difficulties.

6. Space for Reflection

Personal reflection – what have I learned about opportunities to improve myself as a career counselor in supporting NEET youth in the development of their:

- strengths in interpersonal interactions;
- communication and teamwork skills;
- awareness of emotions experienced when facing challenges;
- strategies they can use to maintain calmness and focus.

(Space for writing and reflection for the trainee.)

7. Personal Development Plan



The career counselor can help the young person create a simple, visual **personal development plan** for developing interpersonal skills (competencies). The plan is based on self-assessment, goal setting, selecting action strategies, and identifying evidence that confirms progress.

Competency	Current level (1–5)	Goal	Strategy	Evidence of progress
Communication	3	5	Participation in interview simulations and requesting feedback	Recording of a practice interview
Teamwork	2	4	Active participation in group tasks	Teamwork report
Resilience	2	4	Keeping a weekly emotional journal	Journal entries



8. Self-Assessment of the Mentor – Career Counselor

Competency	Before the module	After the module	Evidence
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in developing clear and assertive communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in developing active and empathetic listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in developing effective teamwork skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in developing time management and prioritization skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in developing constructive stress-management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

9. Practical Suggestions for the Career Counselor

- Use short and engaging activities at the beginning of sessions (e.g., icebreakers or simple cooperative exercises) to build comfort and a collaborative atmosphere.
- Reinforce positive behaviors by recognizing specific actions and visible progress made by participants.
- Incorporate peer feedback by encouraging the group to point out strengths and areas for development in a supportive and respectful environment.
- Use real-life examples that illustrate effective teamwork, overcoming difficulties, and



ways of coping with challenges.

- Teach that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process, emphasizing the value of trying, reflecting, and improving.

Empathy remains one of the most effective tools in the work of a career counselor.

10. Conclusions

Developing soft skills is a real investment in the future. Young people who build self-confidence, learn empathy, and develop effective communication skills enter adulthood better prepared for cooperation, innovation, and taking on leadership roles.

The role of the career counselor is to support this process by creating a safe space in which young people can experiment, make mistakes, learn from them, and gradually develop their competencies.

“Interpersonal skills are the foundation of employability—and of humanity.”

11. Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Mentoring

Gender equality and social inclusion are key values of the **Career eMerge** program. The results of baseline research show that women from the NEET group are particularly vulnerable to vocational and social exclusion; therefore, mentoring should take into account their specific needs and barriers.

In inclusive mentoring, it is essential that the mentor:

- uses neutral and non-discriminatory language, free from prejudice and stereotypes;
- is aware of cultural and gender-related barriers that may limit the participation of young women;
- adopts an empathetic attitude and listens attentively, valuing the diversity of experiences;
- promotes balance between work, personal life, and family responsibilities;
- strengthens women’s self-confidence by supporting their active participation in social and professional life.

Recommended practice: it is worth inviting women who serve as inspiring role models—



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experts or mentors—to participate in sessions, and creating a space in which open and safe dialogue about equal opportunities is possible.

“Inclusive mentoring is not only about providing support—it is about ensuring that every participant has a voice, visibility, and real freedom of choice.”



MODULE 4 – PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Authors: Vanda Santos, Monika Mazur-Mitrowska

1. Introduction

Professional and personal success depends not only on technical skills, but also on mental and emotional well-being. Many young people from the NEET group struggle with anxiety, low self-esteem, frustration, and even symptoms of depression. These factors weaken motivation, decision-making capacity, and perseverance in seeking opportunities.

A career counselor does not replace a psychologist, but can play a key role in active listening, support, and initial guidance. The aim of this module is to enable career counselors to





recognize signs of stress, support emotional balance, and refer individuals to specialized support when needed.

“Caring for the mind is preparing the ground on which the future can grow.”

2. Module Objectives

The main objective is to enable career counselors to provide emotional support to NEET youth, promoting well-being, self-confidence, and balanced stress management.

Specific objectives include:

- recognizing signs of anxiety, stress, and lack of motivation in young people;
- applying basic psychological support techniques and active listening;
- teaching young people simple strategies for coping with stress and practicing self-care;
- promoting a safe and empathetic environment during mentoring sessions;
- knowing when and how to refer young people for professional help.

3. Structure and Methodology

The module combines theory and practice through:

- emotional awareness exercises;
- simulations of supportive conversations;
- relaxation and mindfulness techniques;
- guided reflection and group dynamics.

The methodology focuses on three dimensions:

1. recognizing what the young person is feeling;
2. responding with empathy and active listening;
3. strengthening self-care and psychological resilience.

4. Common Psychological Barriers Among NEET Youth

Many young people in this situation experience:

- low self-esteem – “I am not good enough”;
- fear of failure – fear of trying and being rejected;
- social anxiety – discomfort in interactions and interviews;
- procrastination and apathy – difficulties in taking action;
- emotional exhaustion – a feeling of fatigue without a physical cause.

The first step for the career counselor is to acknowledge the young person’s feelings without minimizing them.



5. Psychological Support Techniques

1. Active Listening

This involves listening with genuine attention, without interrupting, judging, or rushing to give advice.

- Show visual engagement (eye contact, nodding, open posture);
- Repeat or paraphrase (“I understand that you felt frustrated...”);
- Validate emotions (“It’s natural to feel this way in such a situation.”).

2. Motivational Interviewing

A technique based on empathy and exploring the young person’s intrinsic motivation.

- **Open-ended questions:** “What would help you take the first step?”
- **Positive affirmations:** “I can see that you’ve already made significant efforts.”
- **Reflective listening:** to reinforce what the young person is saying and help organize their thoughts.
- **Summarizing:** recap what has been said at the end of each session.

3. Positive Reinforcement

Noticing progress, even very small steps, increases self-confidence.

Instead of saying, “You finally did it!”, say:

“Great job—you’re making progress step by step.”

4. Emotional Journal

A simple and effective tool: the young person writes down daily emotions, events, and reflections. This helps identify patterns, triggers, and progress.

5. Empathic Communication

The career counselor may apply the **NVC (Nonviolent Communication)** model by Marshall Rosenberg, which is based on four steps:

1. **Observe without judgment** – describe the situation as it is, without interpretation or labeling.
2. **Express feelings** – say how you feel in relation to the situation.
3. **Identify needs** – name what you need or what is important to you.
4. **Formulate clear requests** – clearly state what action you are asking for.



Example:

A young person regularly arrives late to mentoring sessions.

1. **Observation without judgment**

Career counselor: "I've noticed that during the last three meetings, you arrived about 20 minutes late."

2. **Expressing feelings**

Career counselor: "I feel concerned and a bit helpless in situations like this..."

3. **Identifying needs**

Career counselor: "...because it's important to me that our meetings run calmly and for their full duration—then we can really work on your goals."

4. **Clear request**

Career counselor: "Could you try to arrive on time, or let me know in advance if something delays you?"

Participant's response (example):

Young person: "I'm sorry, I often miss the bus. I can message you earlier if I see that I'll be late."

6. Stress Management Techniques

1. **4–7–8 Breathing**

Breathe in a rhythm: inhale for 4 seconds → hold the breath for 7 seconds → exhale for 8 seconds.

This technique helps calm the nervous system, reduce tension, and lower anxiety levels.

2. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Tense and then relax successive muscle groups, moving from one part of the body to another.

This technique helps gradually release accumulated tension and relax the body.

3. **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness involves consciously focusing on the present moment. It can be practiced by concentrating on the breath or through a short guided meditation (3 to 5 minutes).

4. **Self-Care Routine**

Encourage simple habits that support well-being, such as regular sleep, a balanced diet, spending time outdoors, light physical activity, and taking breaks from digital devices.

7. Practical Exercises



Exercise 1 – “Success Journal”

For one week, the participant—the young person—writes down three small achievements each day. During the next session, they share one of them with the group.

Objective: to strengthen focus on positive experiences and build a sense of progress.

Exercise 2 – “My Mental Safe Space”

Guide a short visualization: “Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Imagine a place where you feel calm, comforted, and safe. Notice the sounds, colors, and scents...”

Objective: to teach a simple relaxation technique and anxiety control.

Exercise 3 – “Emotion Map”

The career counselor hands out a sheet with emoticons or facial expressions. The young person marks the emotions they experienced during the week.

Objective: to increase emotional awareness and facilitate dialogue about feelings.

Exercise 4 – “Energy Wheel”

Divide a sheet of paper into two parts:

- **Side A** – “Activities that drain my energy”;
- **Side B** – “Activities that restore my energy.”

Closing discussion: How to maintain balance between daily effort and emotional rest.

Objective: to increase awareness of sources of strain and recovery, and to develop skills for maintaining emotional balance.

8. Space for Reflection

Personal reflection – what have I learned about opportunities to improve myself as a career counselor in supporting NEET youth in the area of emotional development and stress management:

- What signs of stress do I notice in the young people I work with, and how can I interpret them more accurately?
- What strategies do I use to help NEET youth calm down and regain emotional balance in difficult moments?
- How do my own emotional reactions influence the way I support a young person experiencing stress?
- How can I take better care of my own well-being in order to accompany young people more effectively through tension and emotions?



(Space reserved for personal notes and responses.)

9. Self-Assessment of the Mentor – Career Counselor

Competency	Before the module	After the module	Evidence
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in recognizing signs of stress and anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in applying simple relaxation techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in building a positive approach to challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in learning when and how to ask for help and support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in shaping emotional balance in everyday life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

10. Practical Suggestions for the Career Counselor

- Avoid diagnosing—listen attentively, seek to understand, but do not assign labels or disorders.
- Ensure confidentiality and respect in every conversation and when sharing information.
- Validate the participant’s emotions, showing that they are understandable and worthy of attention (“What you’re feeling is okay”).
- In situations of emotional crisis, use a calm, balanced tone and clear messages.
- Reinforce self-care habits, emphasizing that “you can’t help others with an empty cup.”
- Keep contacts for mental health professionals and local support services readily available so you can refer a young person when needed.

A career counselor is not a therapist, but can be a turning point.



11. Conclusions

Emotional balance is the foundation of every process of vocational reintegration. A young person who has inner calm and self-confidence is better able to face challenges and persist in pursuing their goals.

The career counselor plays a mediating role in maintaining this balance—being someone who listens, welcomes, and helps another person rediscover their inner strength.

“The greatest courage is caring for yourself so that you can begin again.”

MODULE 5 – CAREER GUIDANCE AND APPLICATION PREPARATION

Authors: Rosalia Pereira, Mirosław Żurek

1. Introduction

Career guidance is a process that helps young people discover their place in the world of work—a space where their skills, values, and interests meet the needs of society.

For many young people from the NEET group, this stage is also a path to rebuilding identity. After experiences of rejection, unemployment, or dropping out of education, regaining belief in the possibility of pursuing a meaningful life project becomes crucial.

The career counselor acts as a mediator in this process, supporting young people in defining their profile, setting realistic goals, and preparing effective application documents.

“To guide means to help another person see horizons where they once saw only walls.”

2. Module Objectives

The main objective is to **strengthen the position of career counselors** in conducting career guidance processes and supporting NEET youth in preparing effective applications for the labor market or for training opportunities.

Specific objectives include:

- helping young people define a coherent and motivating career path;





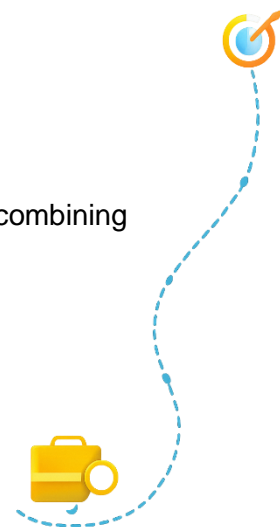
- applying career guidance and counseling techniques;
- supporting young people in preparing formal applications (for jobs, internships, training);
- developing personal and professional presentation skills;
- promoting autonomy and perseverance in building one's career path.

3. Structure and Methodology

This module has been developed based on a “**learning by doing**” approach, combining reflection, planning, and action.

Suggested steps:

1. Self-awareness and vocational diagnosis.
2. Exploration of occupations and labor market opportunities.
3. Goal setting and career plan development.
4. Preparation and submission of applications.
5. Ongoing feedback and monitoring.



4. Vocational Diagnosis

The career counselor should help the young person reflect on:

- vocational and personal interests;
- transferable skills (from previous experiences);
- values and expectations related to work;
- real and perceived barriers that hinder employment.

Useful tools:

1. **RIASEC test or interest inventory** – help identify vocational preferences and areas in which the young person feels most motivated;
2. **Narrative interview about life experiences** – allows exploration of the participant's story, values, strengths, and previous choices;
3. **Personal SWOT analysis** – used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to define opportunities and threats related to career development;
4. **“Career Dream Map” worksheet** – enables visualization of career goals over a 1-, 3-, and 5-year perspective and linking them to concrete steps;
5. **Portfolio** – a collection of evidence of skills, projects, and achieved results;
6. **Professional digital profile** – e.g., LinkedIn or Europass, kept up to date and consistent with other documents.

1. Differentiation Strategies

- Personalizing each application instead of using generic templates;



- Highlighting achievements and results rather than only listing tasks performed;
- Using industry-specific keywords;
- Ensuring consistency between the CV, cover letter, and interview messaging;
- Adding a simple and professional digital signature.

2. Preparation for Interviews and Presentations

The career counselor should prepare the young person to demonstrate confidence and authenticity.

3. Training Topics to Be Delivered with the Young Person (NEET):

- personal presentation (elevator pitch), e.g., “Tell me about yourself in one minute”;
- answering difficult questions: “Why should I hire you?”, “Tell me about a failure”;
- non-verbal communication: posture, eye contact, tone of voice;
- coping with anxiety and stress before a job interview.

4. Guided Simulation

The career counselor takes on the role of a recruiter and conducts a simulated job interview. After the simulation, the young candidate completes a self-assessment form and receives constructive feedback.

5. Practical Exercises

Exercise 1 – “Opportunity Map”

The young person searches for three real job offers and analyzes the requirements, necessary skills, and employment conditions. The group then jointly discusses which offer best matches the participant’s profile.

Objective: to develop skills in analyzing job offers and matching one’s profile to labor market requirements.

Exercise 2 – “My Career Project”

Using the framework presented in section 5.5, the participant describes their career project in five steps. The career counselor supports them in formulating SMART-compliant goals and identifying the necessary resources.

Objective: to develop skills in planning professional development and defining realistic and measurable goals.

Exercise 3 – “Cover Letter”

Within 20 minutes, the young person prepares a short cover letter for a selected position, focusing on three elements: who they are, what they can offer, and why they are interested in the opportunity.



Objective: to improve skills in clearly presenting oneself and one’s motivation in application documents.

Exercise 4 – “360° Feedback”

Participants review each other’s cover letters and CVs and then provide constructive feedback based on criteria of clarity, structure, and effectiveness of the message.

Objective: to develop skills in giving and receiving feedback and to improve the quality of application documents.

6. Space for Reflection

Personal reflection – what have I learned about opportunities to improve myself as a career counselor in supporting NEET youth in the area of career development and future planning:

- How can I help a young person from the NEET group better understand themselves and the realities of the contemporary labor market?
- In what ways can I support a young person in identifying a type of work that aligns with their values, predispositions, and lifestyle?
- What concrete actions can I propose so that the young person can take a step toward their career goal starting tomorrow?

7. Self-Assessment of the Mentor – Career Counselor

Competency	Before the module	After the module	Evidence
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in clearly defining their career goal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in preparing a complete application	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in preparing for job interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in building self-confidence when talking about themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in developing a proactive approach to seeking opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

8. Practical Suggestions for the Career Counselor

- Avoid imposing ready-made career paths—indicate directions, but do not make decisions for the young person.
- Encourage optimistic realism, based on the message: “it is not easy, but it is possible.”
- Celebrate small successes, such as submitting an application or receiving an interview invitation.
- Help young people recognize the value of their informal experiences and translate them into professional competencies.
- Provide concrete examples of achievements and success stories that can inspire and strengthen motivation.

Career guidance is most effective when it reinforces purpose and builds a young person’s self-confidence.

9. Conclusions

Career guidance is the point where self-awareness meets the real world. When a young person realizes that they have something valuable to offer and finds ways to express it, they gain not only a job, but also direction.

The career counselor is the one who facilitates this journey—transforming a young person’s fear of the future into willingness to act, and that willingness into concrete plans.

“Vocation is the place where what we love to do most meets what the world most needs.”



MODULE 6 – DIGITAL TOOLS AND EVALUATION

Authors: André Nunes, Anna Piszczek

1. Introduction

We live in a digital era in which access to information, training, and employment increasingly depends on digital skills. The ability to use technology productively, safely, and strategically is now an essential condition for integration into the labor market.

For many young people from the NEET group, the digital world can be both a barrier and an opportunity. A lack of computer skills, limited access to equipment, or insufficient online safety awareness are common challenges. The role of the career counselor is to support young people in developing these skills, showing how technology can be a tool for autonomy, learning, and increasing employability.

“Technology should empower, not exclude.”

2. Module Objectives

The main objective is to enable career counselors and NEET youth to use digital tools that enhance communication, productivity, and active job searching.

Specific objectives include:

- promoting responsible and ethical use of digital technologies;
- teaching how to create and manage professional online profiles;
- using digital tools for research, learning, and networking;
- strengthening online safety and privacy;
- applying digital tools to assess progress and outcomes.

3. Structure and Methodology

The module is practical and exploratory in nature, with demonstrations and guided exercises. During sessions, it is recommended to use computers, tablets, or smartphones.

Recommendations:

1. Assessing the participant’s level of digital competencies.
2. Introducing basic digital work and communication tools.
3. Creating professional profiles and application documents in digital formats.
4. Practicing practical skills through online job search simulations.
5. Conducting a final evaluation and providing constructive feedback.



4. Basic Digital Skills

Based on the **European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp)**, the career counselor should support the young person in developing skills in the following areas:

Area	Description	Examples of competencies
Information and digital literacy	Searching for, evaluating the quality of, and managing information online	Effective Google searches, source verification
Communication and collaboration	Interaction, information exchange, and working with others in digital environments	Professional email communication, videoconferencing, social media
Digital content creation	Creating, editing, and presenting digital materials	Word, Canva, PowerPoint
Digital safety	Protection of personal data and privacy, and safe use of the internet	Password management, recognizing scam attempts
Problem solving	Using technology to find solutions and improve work processes	Productivity apps, generative artificial intelligence tools

5. Recommended Tools

Recommended Tools

1. Communication and Networking

- **LinkedIn:** creating a professional career profile, networking, and searching for job opportunities;
- **Zoom / Google Meet:** conducting virtual meetings and job interviews;
- **Professional email address:** using an appropriate signature, applying digital etiquette, and following good communication practices.

2. Organization and Productivity

- **Google Drive / OneDrive:** storing, organizing, and sharing documents;
- **Trello / Notion:** task planning, work organization, and progress monitoring;
- **Digital calendar:** managing meetings and setting automatic reminders.

3. Preparing Documents and Applications

- **Europass:** creating a digital CV and portfolio;
- **Canva:** designing CVs, presentations, and visual materials;
- **ChatGPT / Copilot / generative AI tools:** support in writing and editing documents and simulating job interviews (with ethical and supervised use).

4. Online Training

- **IEFP and EURES:** portals with job offers and access to training and courses;
- **Coursera, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning:** platforms offering courses and training





programs;

- **YouTube Edu:** tutorials and materials for self-directed learning.

5. Digital Safety

- Avoid sharing personal data on websites that are unverified or raise doubts.
- Use strong passwords and two-factor authentication to enhance account security.
- Regularly update software and antivirus programs to keep devices secure.
- Recognize phishing attempts and other online scams by paying attention to suspicious messages and links.

The ability to use digital technologies is also a form of emotional competence—it fosters autonomy, critical thinking, and responsibility for oneself.

6. Practical Exercises

Exercise 1 – “My Online Professional Profile”

Each participant, with the support of a counselor, creates or updates their professional profile on LinkedIn or Europass.

Objective: building a coherent and professional digital identity.

Exercise 2 – “Digital Employability Map”

The group jointly identifies useful websites, applications, and platforms that help find jobs, training opportunities, and local development options. The outcome is a list of resources prepared in Google Sheets or another shared document.

Objective: developing skills in using digital tools to search for job offers and educational opportunities, and building awareness of available support resources.

Exercise 3 – “Simulated Digital Application”

Participants prepare and submit a simulated online application, including a CV, cover letter, and email message. The counselor evaluates the clarity of the documents, correctness of structure, and compliance with digital communication etiquette.

Objective: improving practical skills in preparing and submitting online applications in line with professional digital communication standards.

Exercise 4 – “Online Safety in 10 Steps”

The group takes part in a guided discussion on good practices related to online safety and privacy. Each young participant selects one concrete action to implement immediately—for example, changing a password or enabling two-factor authentication.



Objective: increasing awareness of digital threats and developing the ability to immediately apply basic online safety principles.

7. Digital Evaluation

Evaluation can be carried out using interactive tools that engage participants and provide immediate feedback.

Examples of tools include:

- **Google Forms:** self-assessment questionnaires for digital competencies;
- **Kahoot / Mentimeter:** quizzes to check knowledge related to a given module;
- **Trello / Notion:** tracking task progress within the Individual Action Plan;
- **Excel / Google Sheets:** monitoring individual and group performance indicators.

8. Digital Skills Assessment Model

Area	Initial level	Final level	Evidence
Document creation	2	4	Prepared digital CV
Online communication	3	5	Active and completed LinkedIn profile
Digital security	2	4	Two-factor authentication enabled
Information search	3	5	Identified reliable online resources

9. Space for Reflection

Personal reflection – what have I learned about opportunities to improve myself as a career counselor in supporting NEET youth in the area of digital competencies:

- How can I help a young person from the NEET group use basic digital tools confidently and consciously?
- How can I more effectively support a young person in overcoming difficulties encountered when using technology?
- In what ways can I use digital tools to support a young person in achieving their career goals?

(Space reserved for notes and individual reflections.)



10. Self-Assessment of the Mentor – Career Counselor

Competency	Before the module	After the module	Evidence
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in building confidence in using basic digital tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in creating and maintaining an up-to-date, professional online profile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in preparing and submitting complete digital applications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in applying good digital security practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I know how to support a young person from the NEET group in using technology for learning and skills development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

11. Practical Suggestions for the Career Counselor

- Assess the young person’s digital skill level without judgment, starting from what they already know and can do.
- Promote peer mentoring, in which young people learn from one another.
- Stimulate curiosity and encourage continuous learning through short tasks and simple technology experiments.
- Introduce small digital challenges, for example: “create an online version of your CV by tomorrow.”
- Promote digital balance by caring for the proportion between screen time and offline rest.

Technology is a tool, not a goal. It should support the development of individuals and society.



12. Conclusions

Digital inclusion is a form of social inclusion. When a young person learns to use digital tools, they broaden their horizons, regain self-confidence, and gain control over their own career path.

The career counselor acts as a mediator in this process—someone who transforms digital technology into a tool that supports autonomy and employability among young people.

“The future belongs to those who learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

Alvin Toffler

FINAL SECTION– MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Authors: Dulce Forte, Paulina Zajac

1. Introduction

The effectiveness of the mentoring program depends on its ability to generate real and measurable outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation of activities make it possible to understand what works, identify areas for improvement, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

This section presents strategies for monitoring, evaluation, and continuity of the **Career Counselors’ Mentoring Program**, ensuring that the investment made today will deliver lasting results in the future.

“What cannot be measured cannot be improved.”

Peter Drucker

2. Monitoring Principles

Monitoring is the systematic tracking of the implementation of program activities based on predefined indicators. It should be participatory in nature, carried out regularly, and based on reliable data.

Key principles:

- **Transparency:** using clear, objective, and verifiable data.
- **Regularity:** conducting monitoring on an ongoing basis (monthly, quarterly, and annually).





- **Participation:** active involvement of career counselors, young participants, and program partners.
- **Usefulness:** focusing monitoring results on informed decision-making and continuous improvement of activities.

3. Structure of the Monitoring System

1. Monitoring Levels

1. **Individual level:** monitoring the progress of each young person (Individual Action Plan – IAP, self-assessment, personal indicators).
2. **Formative level:** analysis of the outcomes of mentoring and training activities.
3. **Institutional level:** evaluation of the overall implementation of the program and its social impact.

2. Sources of Information

- Session reports and checklists.
- Satisfaction and self-assessment questionnaires.
- Individual interviews and focus groups with career counselors and young people.
- Administrative and statistical data (e.g., number of registrations, completed trainings, etc.).
- Digital indicators (platform activity, online feedback).

4. Evaluation Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Source of verification	Frequency
Participation	Number of monitored young people	Attendance registers	Monthly
Employability	Number of young people entering the labor market	Mentoring reports	Quarterly
Training	Number of young people participating in training programs	Course lists and certificates	Quarterly
Satisfaction	Participant satisfaction level (1–5)	Questionnaires	Semi-annually
Impact	Improvement of interpersonal and digital skills	Self-assessment and career counselors' feedback	Annually

5. Program Evaluation



Programme evaluation involves analysing results, effectiveness, and impact, as well as assessing the extent to which the intended objectives have been achieved.

Types of evaluation:

- **Formative:** conducted during programme implementation, allowing real-time adjustments.
- **Summative:** carried out at the end of each annual cycle; measures outcomes and overall programme impact.
- **Qualitative:** based on interviews, feedback, and participant narratives.
- **Quantitative:** based on indicators, numerical data, and statistics.

Key evaluation questions:

1. To what extent did the programme achieve its intended objectives?
2. How effective were the methods and approaches used?
3. What skills did the young participants develop through the programme?
4. What changes were observed in the functioning of institutions and teams implementing the programme?
5. What factors facilitated success, and what obstacles were encountered?



Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

- **Mentoring session form:** a record of activities, participants, and key observations from each session.
- **Self-assessment grid:** a tool completed by young participants and counselors at the beginning and end of the programme, allowing the tracking of competency development.
- **Progress reports:** quarterly reports prepared by mentors, documenting the course and outcomes of the work.
- **Satisfaction surveys:** short questionnaires used after each module or event to assess the quality of activities.
- **Digital indicator dashboard:** automated monitoring of progress and activity using Excel, Google Sheets, or management platforms (e.g. Notion, Trello).



7. Sustainable Development Plan

To ensure the continuity of the programme, it is essential to plan its sustainability across three dimensions: **institutional, financial, and human**.

1. Institutional Sustainability

- Integrating the programme into the organisation's policies and strategic plans so that it becomes an integral part of its activities.
- Formalising partnerships with public and private institutions, which strengthens stability and facilitates cooperation.
- Disseminating programme results to enhance credibility and attract new partners and forms of support.

2. Financial Stability

- Diversifying funding sources, e.g. European funds, local partnerships, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- Developing complementary products such as workshops, training sessions, or advisory services.
- Creating an alumni database that supports fundraising activities and volunteer recruitment.

3. Human Sustainability

- Continuous recognition, reinforcement, and development of career counselors' competencies.
- Building support networks among mentors, trainers, and programme partners.
- Implementing "train-the-trainer" programmes to ensure continuity of knowledge and skills within the team.
- Promoting well-being, motivation, and work–life balance within the team.

A programme is truly sustainable when its effects remain visible and lasting even after funding has ended.

8. Communication of Results

Effective communication of results is a key element of programme sustainability. Outcomes and good practices should be regularly shared through various channels, such as:

- Annual reports and newsletters.
- Public events, forums, conferences, and seminars.
- Social media and the institution's official website.
- Success stories and short video testimonials from participants.



“Results have value only when they inspire others to act.”

9. Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement

Each programme cycle should conclude with a joint reflection session involving career counselors, young participants, and partners. Its purpose is to identify which actions delivered the best results, what needs improvement, and how to adapt the programme to the changing needs of young people and labour market realities.

Recommended tools:

- **“Keep – Stop – Start” analysis:** identifying actions to continue, discontinue, and introduce.
- **Continuous improvement matrix (PDCA):** Plan – Do – Check – Act, used for systematic process improvement..

10. Impact Indicators and Expected Outcomes

The impact evaluation of the **Career eMerge** mentoring programme aims to measure the real effects the project has on mentors, young people from the NEET group, and the institutions involved in its implementation.

Impact Indicators – NEET Youth

Indicator	Description / Objective	Source of Verification
Increased self-confidence	30% increase in the average level of self-efficacy	Entry and exit questionnaires
Educational reintegration	20% of participants return to education	Training registers
Labour market integration	25% of young people gain employment or complete an internship	Mentoring reports
Development of digital competences	+40% increase in DigComp-related knowledge	Self-assessment forms

Impact Indicators – Career Counselors

Indicator	Description / Objective	Source of Verification
Development of mentoring skills	80% of counselors feel better prepared	Post-training surveys
Use of innovative methodologies	Application of innovative methodologies in practice	Institutional reports
Transnational cooperation	Exchange of best practices between Portugal and Poland	Partner reports

11. Conclusions





Monitoring and evaluation are not merely administrative procedures—they are tools for learning and institutional development. They ensure that the Mentoring Programme continues to evolve, remaining relevant, effective, and inspiring for new generations of young people.

“The most lasting impact is the one that renews itself with each new learning cycle.”

PRACTICAL APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Individual Action Plan (IAP) Template

Young person's name	Start date:	Career counselor:

Overall goal:

Specific goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Action plan:

Goal	Planned action	Deadline	Responsible	Success indicatorsukcesu	Progress
					<input type="checkbox"/> To start <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Completed

Young person's reflections:

What have I learned and what have I achieved so far?





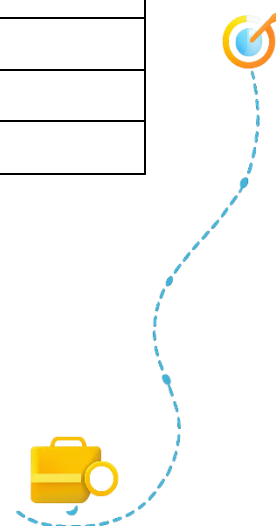
APPENDIX 2 – Competency Self-Assessment Grid

Instructions: Rate your level in each of the competencies below using the scale:

1 = very low level; 5 = very high level.

The table should be completed at the beginning and at the end of the programme to compare progress.

Competency	Before the programme	After the programme	Observations / Evidence
Self-awareness			
Goal setting			
Communication			
Teamwork			
Emotional management			
Resilience			
Active job search			
Digital skills			





APPENDIX 3 – Mentoring Session Form

Date:	Location:	Duration:
Counselor:	Participants:	Number of young people:

Session topic:

Session objectives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activities carried out:

Activity, Description, Duration , Observations

Key outcomes and reflections:

Next steps / recommendations:





APPENDIX 4 – Session Evaluation Form

Purpose: to collect feedback on satisfaction and usefulness of the session.

Rating scale: 1 = very low 5 = very high

1 2 3 4 5

Aspect evaluated

Clarity and organization of the session

Relevance of the content

Participation and engagement

Support and guidance from the counselor

Usefulness for my development.

Suggestions for improvement:

.....





APPENDIX 5 – List of Useful Digital Tools

Category	Tool	Main use
Job search	IEFP, EURES, Indeed, NetEmpregos	Job and internship opportunities
Online training	Coursera, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning	Courses and certifications
CV creation	Europass, Canva	CV templates and portfolios
Project management	Trello, Notion, Google Sheets	Planning and monitoring
Communication	Gmail, Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp Web	Communication and interviews
Security	Google Authenticator, LastPass	Protection and authentication
Collaboration	Google Drive, OneDrive	File sharing and storage





APPENDIX 6 – Progress Report Template

Reference period:	Career counselor:
Number of young people supported:	Total number of sessions conducted:

Summary of activities carried out:

1. Identified challenges:

Recommendations and next steps:





APPENDIX 7 – References and Additional Resources

European Handbooks and Guidelines

- **European Mentoring and Guidance Frameworks for Youth** (EU, 2022)
- **DigComp 2.2 – The European Digital Competence Framework**
- **OECD Skills Outlook 2024 – Skills for a Resilient Society**

National Resources – Portugal

- **IEFP – Institute for Employment and Vocational Training**
- **ANQEP – National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education**
- **EURES Portugal – National Contact Point**

National Resources – Poland

- **Public Employment Services (PES)** – in particular County and Regional Labour Offices
- **Educational Research Institute – National Research Institute (IBE PIB)**
- **EURES Poland – European Employment Services (Poland)**

Recommended Bibliography

International Literature

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APPENDIX 8 – NATIONAL REFERENCE STUDIES

Portugal and Poland, 2024–2025

Introduction

This handbook was developed on the basis of national research and analyses conducted in Portugal and Poland within the European project **Career eMerge – Mentoring Programme for Career Counselors**, funded under Erasmus+ KA210-VET.

These studies provided the empirical and methodological foundation for designing the mentoring programme by identifying needs, gaps, and best practices in the work of career counselors supporting NEET youth (not in education, employment, or training).

National Study – Portugal

Framework

The aim of the Portuguese study, carried out by the AESS team and local partners, was to understand the challenges faced by career counselors and NEET youth in the process of social and vocational integration.

Methodology

A qualitative and desk-based analysis was conducted, complemented by interviews with trainers, employment specialists, and youth mentors. Follow-up activities were also observed within the context of vocational training and labour market reintegration programmes.

Key findings:

- The need to strengthen interpersonal and psychological skills among career counselors;
- A lack of coherent methods for providing emotional and motivational support to young people;
- Difficulties among young people in defining realistic career goals;
- The importance of digital competences and lifelong learning as factors of inclusion;
- Emphasis on a mentoring approach based on empathy, close monitoring, and personalised Individual Action Plans (IAPs).

Recommendations

- Develop a structured handbook to support career counselors;
- Design an integrated mentoring model with particular attention to emotional balance, interpersonal skills, and employability in a digital environment;
- Promote the exchange of practices between Portugal and Poland.

National Study – Poland





Context

The Polish study, coordinated by WIR with the support of project partners, analysed the situation of NEET youth in Poland and the career guidance strategies implemented in training centres and employment services.

Methodology

The study combined interviews with career counselors, trainers, and programme managers involved in employment mediation, with secondary data collection on the Polish labour market and youth policies.

Key findings:

- Persistent territorial and socio-economic inequalities in youth integration;
- A lack of practical and structured tools for career counselors;
- The need to incorporate psychological support and stress management into guidance methodologies;
- The importance of strengthening soft skills and autonomy in the job search process;
- The value of transnational cooperation as a way to share resources and innovative methodologies.

Recommendations

- Adapt and replicate European best practices (such as the Career eMerge model);
- Strengthen continuous professional development for career counselors;
- Create accessible educational materials that can be used in diverse contexts.

Comparative Synthesis

Dimension	Portugal	Poland	Convergence
Main challenges	Low motivation among young people and lack of soft skills	Lack of structured tools and psychological support	Both highlight the need to strengthen emotional and methodological support
Intervention priorities	Interpersonal and digital development	Structured and practical guidance	Complementary
Recommended methodology	Individual and formative mentoring	Mentoring with emotional support	Career eMerge hybrid model



Conclusions

The national studies confirmed the relevance and urgent need to create a **European Mentoring Programme for Career Counselors** that integrates theory, practice, and operational tools.

The needs identified in both countries resulted in a shared intervention model that combines technical, interpersonal, and digital skills into a learning pathway focused on well-being and employability of young people from the NEET group.

This handbook is therefore a direct outcome of applied research and the cooperation between Portuguese and Polish teams, constituting a European intellectual output that can be replicated and adapted in other contexts of career guidance and training.

