

Enabling careers and learning – views from within and beyond sectors

Chair: *Jan Woldendorp*, Independent expert, Former Lecturer, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands, CareersNet expert

Panelists :

- *Caroline Mancel*, Présidente du Réseau international des Cités des Métiers /Deputy Director General, Actiris, Belgium
- *Franziska Rieder*, Coordinator, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, Maison de l'orientation – Service de coordination, Luxembourg, CareersNet expert
- *Wolfgang Bliem*, Senior researcher, ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET, Austria, CareersNet expert
- *Ema Perme*, Education Development and Quality Office, Ministry of Education, Slovenia, CareersNet expert

Discussant: *Ilze Astrida Jansone*, Euroguidance programme manager, Broader Educational Experience, Department, State Education Development Agency, Latvia



Rapporteur: *Jerzy Bielecki*, Research assistant, Educational Research Institute – National Research Institute, Poland, CareersNet expert



Summary:

Jan Woldendorp: Set the stage by moving from the "why" and "what" of the guidelines to the "how" of implementation. The evolution of guidance from a "private provision" for the more affluent/who can afford it, to a universal public good requires self-reflection and system improvement. Drawing on a personal experience in the Netherlands, 25 years ago the Dutch system ranked unexpectedly low in European comparisons precisely because most guidance was privately funded and thus inaccessible to the less affluent. This observation also remains relevant today.

- **Caroline Mancel:** Detailed the Cité des Métiers (CdM) model as a response to fragmented services. The model operates as a one-stop shop based on three pillars: multi-sector cooperation, free/anonymous access to lower barriers, and empowerment, helping users manage their own career transitions rather than just following externally provided advice. The model's biggest challenge is not technical but institutional: sustaining cross-sector coordination among actors with different mandates, funding rules, and performance indicators. A warning was forwarded that dependence on project-based funding weakens long-term continuity, and that digital tools, while essential for widening access, risk excluding users with limited digital skills or connectivity.
- **Franziska Rieder:** Outlined Luxembourg's CMS model within the reference framework for guidance in secondary schools, which applies to secondary and vocational education (VET). The model focuses on self-knowledge, exploring the world of work, and understanding learning pathways to enable meaningful decision-making, within a highly diverse and multilingual student population. Three systemic challenges were underlined: (1) unequal implementation between schools: some have made guidance central to their identity, others offer a limited range of measures; (2) professionalisation/staff roles: guidance remains an additional task for most staff rather than a dedicated role; and (3) persistent stereotypes regarding VET, which limit uptake among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds despite considerable policy investment.
- **Wolfgang Bliem:** Highlighted the critical importance of CMS within apprenticeship training in Austria. He noted that while CMS is embedded in lower secondary curricula, guidance in the apprenticeship sector is often ad hoc or reactive, which, according to his research, correlates with higher dropout rates amongst older apprentices (increasing from 7% at age 15 to 21% at age 17). He argued that work-based learning in companies already generates career management competences, but these remain invisible and unstructured; the core challenge is to make this explicit and to embed it formally within apprenticeship curricula.
- **Emilia Perme:** Presented a one-stop guidance pilot in Ljubljana launched in 2023 and thereafter in different settings integrating six different networks: Employment services of Slovenia, education and training providers, and the

university career centres. The project offered flexible afternoon hours to improve access and fostered direct cross-sector collaboration between practitioners. The service was expanded to operate throughout the day; it provided services for young people and adults. Feedback indicated that joint pre-event training for counsellors improved their readiness: three quarters of them reported enhanced confidence in providing cross-sector guidance, while peer learning proved an effective mechanism toward building shared professional standards.

- **Ilze Astrida Jansone:** Summarised the session by identifying three universal pillars for quality: common standards, practitioner professionalisation, and access to stable funding. Latvia's experience in updating national occupational standards through multi-sector coordination was drawn on. The use of ESF funding to establish experiential learning in STEM and civic engagement to help students actively explore their paths was also highlighted. She underlined that guidance should not merely equip individuals to perform specific tasks, but to construct a fulfilling life, a vision that calls for practitioners who are themselves trained to think beyond sectoral boundaries.

Key discussion points:

- **Institutional Fragmentation and Funding:** A primary challenge identified was institutional fragmentation, where different sectors (education, labour, social) operate with conflicting mandates, cultures, and funding mechanisms. Dependence on project-based funding can threaten the continuity and sustainability of successful guidance ecosystems.
- **Professionalisation and Standards:** There is a pressing need for consistent quality and professional standards across all sectors for staff and for services and tools. The recognition of guidance as a dedicated role rather than an additional task (e.g., for teachers) was underlined, requiring mandatory initial and continuous training.
- **Digitalisation and AI:** While AI and digital tools offer benefits in information accessibility and 24/7 support, they must remain support tools for human advisers/career practitioners. The changes are yet new. Concerns were raised regarding the digital divide for vulnerable groups and the need for practitioners to effectively develop new competences to manage a critical understanding of algorithmic matching and automated diagnostics in relation to guidance processes. Questions were raised on the needs and effectiveness of these tools, and further research and evaluation needed.

Main takeaways:

1. **Integrated Ecosystems:** Effective implementation requires moving from fragmented services to coherent guidance ecosystems centred on the user's life transitions.

2. **CMS as Empowerment:** Guidance must shift from "one-off" interventions to developing CMS, providing individuals with skills to create a "compass" for lifelong navigation.
3. **Sustainable Governance:** Achieving the Framework's goals requires formalised governance, stable long-term funding, and national strategies that bridge the gap between education and the labour market. These are of course not new ideas.
4. **Learning by doing in VET:** The apprenticeship system is an ideal, yet underutilised, environment for experiential CMS development, provided it is supported by prior structured guidance and CMS frameworks.
5. **Inclusive Outreach:** Ensuring equity and access remains a priority, requiring low-threshold in-person centres for drop in (e.g., one-stop shops) complemented by curated, age-appropriate labour market and skills intelligence and support in developing CMS to source, interpret and apply information and experience.

Notable Quotes:

- *Guidance is not just about telling people what to do, but mostly about giving them the capacity to manage their own career transitions. (Caroline Mancel)*
- *It is not just about learning how to do some sort of specific task, but about learning to create a life for yourself which is fulfilling. (Ilze Astrida Jansone)*
- *VET, and in particular apprenticeship training, provides an ideal setting for developing CMS through learning by doing; in my view, the crucial point here is to make competence developments - which occur anyway - visible and thereby bring them to the fore. (Wolfgang Bliem)*
- *We need stronger outreach to adults. (Ema Perme)*
- *It's important to exploit all the means and the different types of activities and partnerships to provide holistic and meaningful guidance journey to the pupils. (Franziska Rieder)*

Additional Notes:

- **Monitoring Challenges:** Difficulty in merging diverse databases across sectors for effective user tracking.
- **LMI Integration:** The pedagogical challenge is turning "raw data" into human stories and real-world experiences through company visits and interest-based workshops.
- **AI Balance:** AI is excellent for 24/7 orientation but risks reducing critical thinking in service users/learners if not moderated by qualified staff