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Habitus sensitive
Guidance to reach out to the
'Left-Behind'.
Recommendations for
Policymakers.

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ReachOut to the 'Left-Behind' – Improving guidance for working
persons from the underprivileged milieu
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1. Introduction

1.1. What is it about? The Challenge

“Western societies” are drifting apart. With increasing inequality, the sphere of the so-called underprivileged milieu is growing. Many influences, such as digitalization (digital literacy, information literacy etc.), polarization of the labour market (increasing working poverty, new types of precarious work etc.) and immigration, promote this development.

Education has an crucial role in combating growing inequality in society. However, education is also a central mechanism of distinction¹ in modern society and is therefore not equally accessible to all. Especially for the disadvantaged milieus of the so-called ‘left-behind’, there is a lack of low-threshold counselling and educational opportunities and further education.

1.2. The Erasmus+ Project ReachOut

Responding to the challenges outlined above, the Erasmus+ funded project **ReachOut** (2022–2024):

- **aims to** increase demand and take-up of adult education through effective outreach, guidance, and motivation strategies.
- **focuses on** the needs of working persons from the prime working age with less stable forms of gainful work (e.g. fragmented, precarious, low paid, marginal, partly declared) and a certain distance to formal education and guidance and some of which have migration background.
- **raises** the question of the connectivity of educational guidance to the clients and asks how habitus sensitivity can be supported in offers of guidance.
- **addresses** guidance practitioners and their organisations.
- **publishes** three project outputs for the use of guidance practitioners and other stakeholders:

Country Reports
‘Habitus Sensitive
Guidance for
Underprivileged Milieu’
→ good, applied
practices and
approaches

Self-Study-Manual
‘Experiences and Cases
from working with the
Underprivileged Milieu’
→ theory, case studies,
field reports, guidelines

Policy Paper
‘Habitus Sensitive
Guidance -
recommendations for
policy makers’
→ briefing for
stakeholders

¹ Sociology: distinction of members of certain social groups from each other or from society as a whole. The term was first used by the sociologist Norbert Elias and was popularized by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, particularly through his major work „La distinction“ from 1979. (<https://www.dwds.de/wb/Distinktion>, downloaded 12.12.2023)

The project is working with three main direct and indirect **target groups** to improve the situation in educational guidance for the underprivileged milieu:

A/ **Guidance Practitioners** and their organisations, who are confronted with the challenges of working with persons from the underprivileged milieu, whose habitus differs greatly from that of the guidance practitioners themselves (e.g. due to their educational background).

B/ **Working persons from the underprivileged milieu**, who have a less stable form of gainful work (e.g. fragmented, precarious, low paid, marginal, partly declared).

C/ **Governing Actors** on regional, national and European level. For example, stakeholders responsible for educational guidance and training and stakeholders like policy actors in the field of strategic programme development and funding.

The project is implemented by a European consortium consisting of institutions with long-standing expertise in the field of educational guidance, labour market and education policy, policy analysis, consulting and scientific research:

- ÖSB Social Innovation gemeinnützige GmbH (AT) – leader of the project
- bbb Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung (DE)
- Andragoški Center Republike Slovenije (SI)
- Research Institute for labour and Social Affairs (CZ).

2. Implementing habitus sensitive guidance for working people from underprivileged milieus. Where do we need decision makers and stakeholder?

2.1. Why habitus sensitive guidance?

2.1.1. Society is drifting apart. Education at a loss

Recent changes in the labor market pose numerous challenges with various causes. Commonly referred to as 'megatrends,' these shifts fundamentally impact entire economies and, secondarily, labor markets. The main megatrends include globalization, digitalization, climate change, and demographic and societal shifts. Some of these trends result in incremental changes, while others are more disruptive or 'game-changing'. For instance, they affect the economy's structure, the labor market, the design of industrial relations, and the proportions of various forms of work, all while increasing the precarious balance between flexibility and security in the labor market.

All these changes in the labor market have a significant impact on the workforce. Workers need to respond adequately to remain competitive in the labor market. As widely cited in the literature (Bremer 2017), education is increasingly becoming a crucial and robust determinant of employment and career success.

With the aforementioned changes in the labor market, including its rising knowledge requirements, the approach to (adult) education and the willingness to be educated are becoming more essential. Through lifelong learning, employees can be rewarded with higher status and more interesting, usually better-rated, and better-paying work. However, this learning situation is influenced by labor market conditions and the status of specific working groups or the individual situations of employees and their access to information. Also, while lifelong education is becoming more and more a prerequisite for career success, other factors might carry more weight concerning worker selection and allocation.

Education has always been a crucial distinction mechanism/segmentation mechanism in modern societies and is less open to all than often claimed. Countless milieu studies document that individuals from underprivileged milieus participate much less in education than others—not least because they exhibit a certain "distant attitude" toward the sphere of education, feeling like they "don't fit in". An example of this is Tietgens (1978), who addressed this problem as early as 1964 in his study "Warum kommen wenig Industriearbeiter in die Volkshochschule?" (Why do few industrial workers attend adult education centers?) and primarily attributed the responsibility to adult education institutions and their teachers. If we were discussing objective obstacles to mobility, it must now be pointed out that the behavior of education providers contributes to making these obstacles insurmountable.

Accordingly, participation in further education/adult education is very unevenly distributed along the social stratum/social milieus (See, for example, Bremer 2022, 103: "Institutions of adult education are open to everyone – but not everyone attends!"). Actually, there exists a special technical term for this widespread phenomenon. Experts in the field of adult education use the term the "Matthew-Effect," referring to the Gospel of Matthew: "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29, RSV). Individuals with higher levels of initial education participate much more in learning activities

(formal and non-formal) than those with lower levels of initial education, resulting in an ever-widening gap of educational attainment over the course of their lives.

2.1.2. No one to be left behind. Contribution of guidance

In line with 'emancipatory' educational guidance approaches, which aim to raise awareness of prevailing structures as the causes of problems and promote social mobilization and advocacy for change in unjust social structures (see Sultana 2017, 18), educational guidance can take on an important task here:

Educational guidance should address the challenge of growing inequality in societies by supporting especially individuals from precarious social milieus with low educational attainment levels in participating in further education and fulfilling their career aspirations.

This core task and pivotal target group of educational guidance coincides strongly with the objectives and the target group of the project at hand:

(1) In the ReachOut project, we are addressing the target group: working individuals from underprivileged milieus who have a less stable form of gainful work (e.g., fragmented, precarious, low-paid, marginal, partly declared). On average, this social group has a certain distance from formal education and guidance: They are often low-qualified people with very basic levels of education, as well as functional illiterates. Some of those working individuals may have a migration or refugee background, resulting in little knowledge of the national language or systems.

(2) In the ReachOut project, we are addressing the issue of reaching out to "the left behind" by attempting to reverse the "Matthew-Effect." We want to figure out:

- How can we support the connectivity of educational guidance offers to individuals from underprivileged milieus?
- How can we create counselling settings/formats/approaches that are agreeable to individuals from underprivileged milieus?
- Building on Pierre Bourdieu's habitus approach (1987): How can we consider and address, in our guidance offers, the fundamentally different habitus of individuals from underprivileged milieus and the habitus of guidance practitioners coming from the middle strata of society?
- To sum up: How can we support habitus sensitivity in offers of educational guidance?



"The definition of guidance as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used".

(European Council 2004, 2008).

2.1.3. Habitus at stake. An often ignored phenomenon in guidance

Modern contemporary societies have become very diverse. The economic drifting apart, the diversification and dissolution of traditional social groups such as the „workforce as a social class“, the dominance of the creation of social group affiliation via lifestyle and consumption patterns, the global expansion of immigration areas, to name just a few factors, have led to the social and cultural liquefaction of social structures into small-scale milieu bubbles.

Contemporary counselling and educational offers that want to address/reach certain social target groups cannot avoid taking social milieus and the resulting habitus of the members of the social milieus into account in their conceptual orientation.

“Social milieus bring together people who are at least similar in terms of lifestyle and conduct of life, i.e. in a certain sense they form units within society. On the one hand, the milieus are organized hierarchically according to occupational status and income, but on the other hand, they also stand horizontally next to each other if one concentrates on the lifestyles and the communicative experience goals of the various milieus“ (Barz/Tippelt 2009, 125)²

The focus on milieus therefore not only encompasses objective individual data, but also includes the perspective of the subjects (Bremer 2017, 15). Milieus *„represent a way of life, the everyday level of class practice, which is based on a certain habitus“* (Bremer 2017, 15.) Habitus is understood here as an ensemble of dispositions, attitudes and attitudes. Bourdieu understands habitus as an internalized history, *„which has become second nature, a social necessity transformed into motor schemata and physical automatisms, which makes itself felt in the practices and representations of the individual“* (Bönisch in Horn 2011, 13).

Educational and educational guidance offers are oriented towards the values, goals and needs of the (upper) middle class and the elites with power and influence. According to Bourdieu (1987), the habitus and cultural capital of the upper milieus is thus secured in its dominance, while the habitus and cultural capital of the lower milieus is devalued.

For people from underprivileged milieus, the orientation of educational and guidance offers towards the habitus of middle and upper milieus creates a barrier to participation: The challenge for educational guidance with more educationally underprivileged milieus arises from the confrontation of the *„primary habitus“* with the institutional culture of a guidance institution, which is characterized by other milieus close to education *„The discrepancy between everyday culture and institutional culture (simplified, one can also speak of home game or away game) requires a kind of bridging work that the learners have to perform“* (Bremer 2017, 2)³.

Since both those who design educational and guidance offers and those who implement them usually come from educationally close milieus or have acquired an educationally close habitus in the course of their professional training (secondary habitus), this barrier and strenuous adaptation effort for people from educationally distant milieus is often overlooked and, consciously or unconsciously, rarely taken into account in the design and implementation of educational and guidance offers.

2.2. How to transform guidance offers?



Habitus and habitus sensitivity

Habitus is the result of a variety of influences, including social background, cultural imprints, education, life experiences, and the environment in which a person grows up. Appropriately

² Autor's Translation

³ Autor's Translation

considering habit sensitivity in educational and career counselling is a complex and multifaceted concept. Habit sensitivity refers to the ability to adequately take into account individual habits, lifestyles, and social backgrounds. Furthermore, habit sensitivity is highly context-dependent and can vary depending on the environment and situation. The life circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and social structures of those seeking advice play a crucial role. Often, these aspects are difficult to capture.

2.2.1. What challenges for guidance?

The establishment of a consistently habitus sensitive approach in the conception and implementation of guidance offers entails numerous challenges. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the following central dimensions must be taken into account:

Before counselling

- The approach of habitus-sensitive counselling must be familiar to the counsellors: knowledge - reflection - recognition - application.
- Relevant habitus characteristics of the target milieus, such as the attitude towards educational issues, the design of premises, familiar places or the culture of conversation, must be known in advance in order to be able to tailor the offers to the target group in terms of goal, frequency/tempo, setting, format and counselling methodology.

In the counselling process

- Willingness and ability of the counsellors to reflect on their own habitus-related (pre)judgments and to integrate the habitus-related wishes/values/goals of the clients into the counselling.
- Willingness and ability of the counsellor to support the client in their genuine goals – even if these run counter to their own values/goals and the programmatic goals.

After the counselling

- Enable self-reflection and peer reflection for counsellors – create opportunities for competence development.
- Guarantee follow-up offers for the target group.

And in general

- Addressing the listed tasks requires resources - time, money, motivation.

2.2.2. Ways of responding

Before counselling

- The competence of habitus-sensitive counselling (including self-reflection) should be standard in the training of counsellors, as well as a fixed component of rolling further training and supervision. However, care should be taken not to overload and/or standardize the competence profile of counsellors, but to create space for individual profiles and developments. In addition, the concept should also be integrated into quality assurance measures.

- Precise knowledge about the milieu of the target groups addressed must be acquired in advance and deepened on a rolling basis in the course of the offer. In this way, the goal, frequency/tempo, setting, format and counselling methodology can be successively tailored more and more precisely to the target group.

In the counselling process

- Habitus-sensitive counselling based on a self-reflection process on the part of the counsellor as well as emphatic engagement with the other person takes time. Flexible, multiple interventions with sufficient time resources are preferable to tightly timed one-off interventions.
- Genuine empowerment that is geared towards the goals and needs of target groups requires an open goal orientation of the service.

After the consultation

- Offers of supervision and collegial reflection should support the counsellors in their personal development (also during the counselling process).
- Disadvantaged/vulnerable target groups need support instead of one-off interventions as well as follow-up offers in the area of education and/or the labor market.

And in general

- Decision-makers must create stable and adequately funded structures in which high-quality offers that flexibly meet the needs of the target groups can be implemented.

2.3. What role for decision maker/ stakeholder?

2.3.1. Promoting awareness

Countless political analyses complain that education is still highly inherited, because so-called „educationally disadvantaged groups“ have no intrinsically motivated access to education, which is largely free and open to all anyway.

In most cases, however, there are many reasons for those affected not to take part in educational opportunities. From time and money to required skills, lack of support from employers and negative attitudes towards education, many things can become barriers to education. MacKeracher (2006) has developed a clear barrier structure for this:

Tabelle 1 Barriers to further training by cause (In Hefler, 2013 based on MacKeracher et al., 2006, , p. 94. URL: <https://wb-web.de/wissen/lehren-lernen/geringqualifizierte.html>.)

Barrier	What is it about?	Examples
Situational barriers	Conditions that hinder individual participation	Role conflicts, planned life, lack of resources: time, energy, money, lack of support in the environment

Cognitive barriers	Lack of skills that are a prerequisite for the majority of educational offers	Reading/writing/spelling skills, computer skills, reflective skills, attention span, information retrieval
Institutional barriers	Conditions that restrict access to groups of offers	Lack of entry requirements, lack of support offers, lack of utilization opportunities
Dispositional barriers	Attitude patterns that make participation in further training appear undesirable	Self-awareness/self-confidence, Attitude towards the benefits of further education, Negative previous learning experience, Feeling isolated in the learning group, Health impairment

It is not unusual for dispositional reasons to be at the forefront of analyses that define education as a debt to be paid, i.e. that seek to place the responsibility for the “educationally disadvantaged” on the “educationally disadvantaged”. Sociological milieu studies tell a different story. As described in point 2.1.1, education is also a central mechanism of differentiation in modern society and is therefore not equally accessible to everyone. Especially for the underprivileged milieus of the so-called ‘left-behind’, there is a lack of educational opportunities that are appropriate to their habitus. (See 2.1.1)

In this context, it must be the task of political actors and stakeholders to contribute to defining education as an obligation for weak/vulnerable social groups on the one hand, and to address mechanisms of the “reinforcement of power” of social elites via cultural capital, i.e. education, on the other - what knowledge has value and who has access and how?

In particular, decision-makers should help to ensure that people whose profession has to do with education (mediation, counselling, teaching...) have/train an awareness of habitus-sensitive issues in the context of underprivileged milieus and access to education. It is important for us to emphasize that „habitus sensitivity“ in this context should not be interpreted as a hypersensitive submission to the sensitivities of highly segmented milieu bubbles (see Flaßpöhler 2021, 209), but rather addresses a sensitivity to social processes of differentiation and (exclusion) that (co-)determine the „educational distance“ of underprivileged milieus.

2.3.2. Guaranteeing structural framework conditions

In most countries, educational and careers guidance is a classic case of a multi-level governance challenge. On the horizontal level, the relevant offers are offered in a wide array of sectors: school, adult education, tertiary education, labour market institutions, advocacy groups, the voluntary sector, the private sector, and beyond. On the vertical axis, it involves all levels of government from EU governance, to national ministries, to regional governments and bodies. Under these circumstances, coordinated, coherent political management of the field presents a significant challenge.

This challenge demands good communication between the various levels, sectors and actors involved. Moreover, there is a need to find a good balance when deciding on what level activities should be implemented and decisions made on. Should quality assurance and qualifications for

counsellors be centrally managed and standardised across sectors and regions? (see Götz, Klein, Reutter 2021).



It therefore makes sense to set up national coordinating bodies to coordinate the work of the various departments in the field of guidance (or to have one of the existing national coordinating bodies in the field of education and/or labour market policies take on this role).

National coordinating bodies have a strong support of European networks in the field of guidance, such as Euroguidance (<https://euroguidance.eu/>) and CareersNet (<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/networks/careersnet>).

On the one hand, habitus sensitive counselling offers require highly qualified counsellors with broadly differentiated methodological counselling skills and a high degree of self-reflection. On the other hand, habitus sensitive counselling requires great flexibility in the design of service formats and settings. Outreach formats in particular play a central role in addressing vulnerable/disadvantaged target groups - with all their challenges in terms of cost efficiency, documentation and quality assurance.



Several different definitions of outreach activities can be found in the professional literature, among which, in adult education, the dominant ones are that "...outreach means reaching out to less educated and low-qualified adults in various ways, with which they are made aware and familiarized with the benefits of education and learning" (Eurydice report 2015, 98).

Combining excellent guidance expertise with target-group-oriented flexibility of offers requires stable structural and resource-related (monetary) anchoring in the education and labour market systems, as well as a high degree of professionalization. This requires that an 'educational and careers guidance' profession be established, characterised by the following traits (see also Schiersmann 2013):

institutionalisation, in the sense of guidance offerings being available everywhere, with a consolidated provider structure,

juridification, in the sense of legal safeguarding and codification of our societal mandate,

academisation, of education and training,

scientification, through secure and differentiated scientific knowledge,

professionalisation, among other things through increasing prevalence of guidance as a main career.

2.3.3. Supporting those, who are in the front row

In our opinion, steering actors have the duty to effectively support those operating on the front-line of guidance. We wish to emphasise two areas in this context:

firstly, competence in professional action, and

secondly a good work environment as a prerequisite for professional action.

Professional support for making career and educational decisions

Professionalism refers to competent professional action, i.e. professionalism consists in being able to competently execute actions based on secure knowledge and skills shared within the profession, and therefore relates above all to the individual abilities of counsellors (see Schiersmann 2013).

Habitus sensitivity is a key competence when working with educationally underprivileged groups (see points 2.1 and 2.2). Counsellors should be supported in acquiring and continuously developing this core competence. In our opinion, important dimensions of this competence are

- 1) The ability to reflect on one's own milieu/cultural imprints and the associated values and prejudices towards other milieus/cultures (self-reflection)
- 2) The ability to recognize the milieu/culture-related imprints/values of orientation seekers/clients and to take them into account in the counselling process in all phases and at all levels (empathy)
- 3) The ability to support orientation seekers/clients in their genuine goals - regardless of „dominant goals/values“ (empowerment)
- 4) The ability to break down milieu/culture-related barriers in the counselling process - format, setting, approaches, pace/frequency, interaction (breaking down barriers)
- 5) The ability to approach foreign milieus/cultures - to visit them in their worlds (real and virtual) - outreach counselling/ walking structures (creating access)
- 6) The ability to make disadvantaged groups the focus of one's own work - taking into account the intersectionality of dimensions of disadvantage (inclusion)

Standing on a stable work foundation

Habitus sensitive counselling of challenging target groups in target group oriented formats and settings needs excellent guidance competences, the capacity to self-reflection and a high level of motivation for personal development.

If decision-makers want to get 'the best' for the complex and demanding task of low threshold habitus sensitive educational and careers guidance offers, we recommend using 'good work' concepts (such as that submitted by the German unions) and 'workplace innovation' (see among others Frank Pot, Peter Totterdill, Steven Dhondt (2016) Workplace innovation: European policy and theoretical foundation) to orient their discipline.

In the context of adult education in Austria as well as the situation in Germany, turning away from volatile project financing is an urgent first step.

Beyond this, we wish to emphasise that development requires resources. Guidance counsellors must get the resources to engage with developments in content and methods alongside their regular guidance role. This is the only way that adequate guidance offers can be reliably offered to everyone.

3. Habitus sensitive development of guidance offers

3.1. Further training for counsellors must be expanded in terms of quantity and quality

Consulting has become more challenging

As societies become more diverse, the requirements for high-quality educational and career guidance become more complex. Social diversity also demands a high level of habitus sensitivity, enabling counselors to adopt the perspectives of those whose spaces of thought and possibilities differ fundamentally from their own. In societies such as Germany, which is not disintegrating but is becoming increasingly differentiated into milieus and milieu bubbles, it is evident "that the everyday reality of people—role models, interests, habits—determines milieu affiliation much more strongly than socio-economic living conditions" ⁴ (Gieseke, Käßlinger 2023, 45).

Class and/or stratification models no longer adequately reflect this diversity, and the division between those seeking advice with little formal education and those with skilled worker or academic qualifications only covers sections of social reality. In many European countries, the native population has become more heterogeneous; the proportion of students with a migrant background has increased in many schools, and there are significantly more differences than similarities among people with a migrant background and refugees, indicating a high diversity of milieus and cultures of origin. Being able to understand the perspectives of these different milieus and adopting their viewpoints is a significant challenge for counselors, and they depend on ongoing training to overcome it. The quantity and quality of existing training courses in Germany, for example, are inadequate and not yet systematically anchored anywhere.

There is a need for spaces for reflection and peer counselling

Such further training courses for counselors should also offer opportunities to reflect on their own work and exchange ideas with colleagues. In this context, Heinemann refers to a further training concept by Spirak (1999) in which she describes that it is also very valuable to recognize one's own privileges as a loss. Because if you have certain privileges, you lack certain experiences and thus also certain knowledge, which in turn would open up spaces for thinking and possibilities (Heinemann 2022, 462).

3.2. Establishing outreach structures in the counselling and guidance sector

Extending outreach structures

Guidance offers are often still almost entirely geared towards a „come“ structure, i.e. the expectation that the person seeking advice will seek out appropriate guidance offers and providers. This means that relevant groups are unintentionally excluded from counselling offers. On the one hand, this affects migrants and refugees, where „there is a clear disparity between the need and the opportunities for access. This has to do not only with the migrants' lack of knowledge, but also with the fact that the monocultural orientation of the institutions does not inspire much confidence.“⁵ (Reichel 2022, 178).

⁴ Autor's Translation

⁵ Autor's Translation

Reaching target groups

In a conversation with Reichel, migration researcher Uslucan explains which questions about habitus lead to exclusion in this context.

„For ages, people from provincial backgrounds who grew up in a limited, humble, lonely, and simple environment have been considered to have a different work rhythm, a different relationship to time, and a different perception of human and social spaces. Consequently, their sociocultural habitus made them just as unadaptive to new life circumstances as predisposed to homesickness and cultural adjustment difficulties.”⁶ (Reichel 2022, 177f).

However, the lack of structures based on reaching out is not only a problem for migrants from provincial backgrounds. VHS director Hübner points out in Gieseke/Käpplinger (2023, 45f) the target groups that are inadequately reached by counselling offers in the traditional communication structure.

„1. Those who have not (yet) recognized the personal value of education in their lives. In other words, people who do not expect any real benefit from institutionalized education. 2. In addition, there are women and men who have had bad experiences with learning, have failed... These people often feel stigmatized and are afraid to engage in learning processes again... 3. And finally, the doubters and skeptics of various social milieus who mistrust public education as well as the media they defame as ‘lying press.’”⁷ (Gieseke/Käpplinger 2023, 45f).

The reservations expressed here about "education" also apply to "counseling" for these target groups. Given the scale of these target groups excluded by communication structures, the urgency of establishing structures based on reaching out becomes very apparent.

3.1. Various outreach counselling approaches are relevant for working people from underprivileged milieus

Using trade unions as door openers for educational guidance

Trade unions and guidance counsellors both pursue the goal of responding appropriately to the massive changes in the world of work.

„Trade unions have faced a rapidly changing landscape in recent decades, which has impacted on the restructuring of labour markets, industrial relations and work organization... ... Training, skills development, and the attainment and certification of skills have become important issues for unions as they seek to ensure that their members are fairly paid for skills acquired and that their members are prepared for more frequent employment changes in more turbulent labor markets“ (Cooney/Stuart, 2012).

Close cooperation between trade unions and guidance counsellors is ideal because the advisors are in a position to define the added value of qualification and further training for all parties involved in a quasi-neutral manner and to illustrate the benefits of investing in further vocational training. Trade union representatives in particular can provide the counsellor with information about groups of employees who are less informed about training opportunities and less likely to participate in training. The union representative will primarily focus on groups that are overlooked by employers when it comes to upskilling opportunities, but who do not exclusively need knowledge for work; they also

⁶ Autor's Translation

⁷ Autor's Translation

need the new knowledge to improve their personal lives and to keep up with digital innovations in their everyday lives, etc. Counsellors can organize a special activity in the work organization in cooperation with the union or use the union's media to inform workers.

Counsellor can provide information and advice in guidance with the company's HR department

One example of good practice in „guidance in the workplace“ was the ESF project „Guidance for Employees“ in Slovenia ([see also Country Report Slovenia](#)), or the nationwide program „Continuing Education Mentors“ in Germany ([see also Country Report Germany](#)).

Implementation of information measures in cooperation with others

The counsellor can carry out information and counselling activities for working people from disadvantaged backgrounds in cooperation with other organizations that carry out activities for these groups of adults, e.g. NGOs working with precarious workers, migrants or other marginalized groups.

3.1. Involvement of cultural mediators in outreach activities

In all four countries involved in the Erasmus+ project „ReachOut“ (2022-2024), there is a growing number of workers with a migrant background who face numerous barriers in accessing training, employment or professional development. The project identified that guidance practitioners need additional skills and training to work with this target group. Counsellors can also be supported by „cultural mediators“, which already exist in some countries (e.g. in Slovenia and Austria). Cultural mediators help migrants to integrate more easily into society, work and education. Cultural mediators are trained for this work and have a migration background or experience themselves. They have the advantage that they are familiar with the differences in intercultural competence and language comprehension problems and have good communication skills, etc.

3.2. Understanding educational, career and life counselling as a unit

Decisions for certain educational careers or for professional reorientation as a result of appropriate counselling almost always have consequences for the private, family or social environment. They should therefore also be part of educational and career guidance. *“Just as it is not possible to separate life and work, ... it must/should be possible to include topics relating to the individual's life and social organization in educational and career guidance...”* (Lohmann 2023, 1).

3.3. Design guidance offers in such a way that they also reach “educationally underprivileged milieus“

For those seeking advice who are not familiar with the local guidance centers, it is often an arduous task to find suitable advice centers. *„The offers on offer are often not very visible or transparent for citizens. Awareness of the advice centers and advice offers is... could be improved)* (dvh 2023, 3).

3.4. Challenges of habitus-sensitive counselling in the areas of quality, support, documentation and administration

Educational and career guidance for people from underprivileged milieus is associated with a number of challenges. Educational and career guidance centers are often faced with limited financial resources, in particular, there is often a lack of funding for already disadvantaged social groups. This

can make it difficult to provide high-quality offers. Counsellors need to be culturally sensitive and understand the individual backgrounds and habits of those seeking advice. This requires specific skills that can be trained and perfected on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, the training of counsellors in terms of habitus sensitivity requires additional resources. The administration and implementation of educational and career guidance offers can be complicated by complex bureaucratic requirements and administrative processes that take up time and resources. Effective documentation is crucial to track the needs and progress of those seeking advice. However, in many cases there is a lack of resources and capacity for comprehensive data collection and analysis.

3.5. Establish documentation, administration and monitoring

Overall, the establishment of guidance monitoring seems important, both to increase transparency in the guidance landscape and to generate knowledge that is relevant for the further management of guidance offers, as new constellations, structures and participation structures are always accompanied by new inclusion and exclusion processes that could be better coordinated in this way. For a good practical example of guidance monitoring, please refer to the pilot project „Bildungsberatungsradar“ (Educational Guidance Radar) of the Educational Guidance Network in Upper Austria (Dworschak 2016). A good practice example of an established system for managing guidance activities in adult education is the Slovenian adult education guidance service as a public task; a network of 35 public adult education organizations that are evenly distributed across all 14 Slovenian regions. The public service consists of around 170 full-time and part-time counsellors (100 full-time counsellors in total). In order to monitor their work, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE), the central national research and development organization in the field of adult education, has developed a computer application in which each counsellor records the following:

- Information about advice seekers and the advice service; demographic data of advice seekers, the advice process, its content and outcomes; records of individual and group offers; and
- Information on the structure of adult education counsellors' tasks (six task areas are defined: direct counselling, information, planning, monitoring and evaluation of counselling, development tasks, collaboration and liaison within and outside the organization, professional development) (Dovžak et al. 2020, 28).

The data from this computer application is also one of the bases for the evaluation and development of quality according to the approach specifically defined for guidance in adult education in Slovenia, which includes the following (Pavlič et.al. 2020):

- Self-evaluation (at the level of the individual organization),
- regular annual monitoring (SIAE for the network of all 35 public educational institutions, individual organizations); and
- regular external evaluations (SIAE and other actors in the system).

Based on the analysis of the data and the reports produced, recommendations are made to improve the quality (efficiency) of the guidance service on the basis of defined and written professional standards. In order to evaluate and develop the quality of adult education guidance as a public service, quality standards and evaluation criteria are defined in twelve areas: 1. personnel, 2. premises, equipment and other resources, 3. guidance process, 4. guidance on enrolment in education and continuation of education, 5. Guidance on identifying and documenting knowledge and skills, 6. Guidance on self-directed learning, 7. Outcomes, 8. Impact, 9. Partnership, 11. Needs assessment

and promotion, 12. Evaluation and development of quality (Pavlič et al. 2020; Jug Došler/Pavlič 2022).

3.6. Habitus sensitive guidance needs controlling based on qualitative methods

Habitus is the result of a variety of influences, including social milieu, cultural influences, education, life experiences and the environment in which a person grows up. Assessing habitus sensitivity appropriately in social science research and taking it into account in educational and career counselling is a complex and multi-layered concept. The implementation of habitus sensitivity, for example, requires continuous adaptation of counselling practices. Overall, qualitative methods in particular offer the flexibility and depth required to assess the realization of habitus sensitivity.

Habitus sensitivity refers to the ability to take appropriate account of individual habits, lifestyles and social backgrounds. This is a complex and multi-layered issue that is not easily captured by quantitative measurements. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, allow the depth of these aspects to be adequately explored.

Furthermore, qualitative methods can be combined in order to adequately understand the focus on personal backgrounds and experiences. Above all, detailed analyses are necessary in order to sufficiently understand the complexity and multi-layered nature of the concept and its implementation.

Habitus sensitivity is also highly context-dependent and can vary depending on the environment and situation. The circumstances, cultural backgrounds and social structures of those seeking advice play a decisive role. These aspects are often difficult to capture. By using qualitative methods such as case study evaluations or interviews, counselling situations and processes can be viewed in their respective context. Qualitative case studies make it possible, among other things, to examine individual cases in depth. They offer the opportunity to shed light on the complex interactions between individual backgrounds, educational paths and career decisions. The collection of experiences and needs is essential in order to be able to evaluate the impact of habitus-sensitive approaches. The effectiveness of innovative, project-based practices must be continuously reflected upon in order to further develop guidance practice.

Conclusion

Although there is a consensus in educational and guidance practice, guidance theory and policy that the accelerated change in social and labor market conditions will lead to an increased need for guidance in the future, not enough political precautions are being taken to meet this increased demand. „At present, however, there seems to be a tendency to even reduce counselling capacities. This also seems counterproductive from an economic perspective“ (dbv 2023, 2).

This calls for stronger action at the policy level to strengthen the role of guidance and lifelong learning in society, and in this document we have set out a proposal for measures to increase the involvement of working people from deprived milieu.

„As soon as we looked into the past, we saw nothing but progress. No sooner do we look to the future than we see nothing but decline.“ (Roger Willemsen)

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