rescale

Model for enhanced career guidance, counselling and mentoring in the Reskilling Lab

A guideline for professionals

Mieke de Haan, Maurice de Greef, Daniela Grignoli and Margherita Di Paolo

About the RESCALE project

The 2020 OECD statistics show that 9% of the 25–64 year-olds with an educational level below upper secondary school are unemployed. Besides, lots of in-transition workers, unemployed and inactive adults are not joining adult education. In addition, the EU argues that the green transition and digital transformation is likely to unevenly affect sectors. Therefore, the RESCALE project will develop an innovative approach to up- and reskill skills of in-transition workers, unemployed or inactive adults for new tasks and new jobs in particular from declining sectors into the green and digital economy.

By developing an innovative infrastructure called the 'Reskilling Lab', the labor market position and level of proficiency of transversal, basic, digital and green skills of these vulnerable adults will be improved. First, a comparative analysis will be realized to compare the educational and labor market infrastructures throughout Europe focussing on up- and reskilling skills. As a result an assessment tool for identifying skills among these adults and an innovative European 'Reskilling Labs'

model will be developed, existing of a blueprint for the European 'Reskilling Lab', a model for enhanced career guidance, counselling and mentoring and innovative training materials and –methods. In cooperation with stakeholders like companies, adult education and training providers and public and private organizations 'Reskilling Labs' in 7 countries for 210 to 350 in-transition workers, unemployed or inactive adults will be realised. These 'Reskilling Labs' will be scientific evaluated. Based on these results a digital European 'Reskilling Labs' manual and roadmap for sustainable implementation for professionals will be developed in addition to a policy-model for policy-makers existing of a prototype of a digital decision support system and a business model in order to stimulate effective strategies to up- and reskill skills of in-transition workers, unemployed or inactive adults.

Disclaimer

This product has been translated by use of AI. Although everything has been checked thoroughly still some minor imperfections can be noticed. For the official English document see **https://rescale-eu.com/**.

Content

Model for enhanced career guidance, counselling and mentoring in the Reskilling Lab

In today's complex society, where transition is crucial, achieving personal and professional growth often requires the support of others. Guiding, mentoring, and counselling each play a vital role in helping individuals reach their full potential.
In seven countries, Reskilling Labs will be set up in collaboration with stakeholders such as companies, adult education and training providers, and public and private organizations for 210 to 350 employees in transition, unemployed or inactive adults. These are people aged 20 to 64 with an EQF 1 and EQF 2 level of education, many of whom are women, migrants, or older workers who face multiple and intersecting barriers to participation.

In particular, gender mainstreaming begins with ensuring that these barriers are recognised during intake and needs assessment. For example:

- Women may be overrepresented among the inactive population due to unpaid care responsibilities.
- Gendered expectations may lead to underrepresentation of women in digital or green economy sectors.

Women, migrants or older workers may lack role models or face biases in career counselling environments.

The RESCALE project is developing a blueprint for an innovative approach to upskilling and reskilling the above-mentioned target group for new tasks and jobs, particularly from shrinking sectors to the green and digital economy.

A Reskilling Labs model will combine practical and theoretical knowledge, focusing on basic skills for quality of life and will consist of:

- A blueprint for the European Reskilling Lab
- A model for improved career guidance, counselling and mentoring
- Innovative training materials and methods

The educational model, the blueprint for the Reskilling Lab, focuses on the participant. However, before a participant can start a training course or programme, it is important to have

sufficient background information about them. It is important to develop training programs that are adaptable to changing skill needs and the specific circumstances of individuals. This is listed in the educational model. This includes their socio-demographic background (origin, family, age) as well as their daily activities (work and leisure), the network or networks within which they function, their ability and willingness to learn (in relation to the duration of their vulnerable position) and their sense of urgency to learn.

The most important question, however, is: Which direction does the participant want to go in? In other words, what does the participant want? Do they aspire to a workplace where digital skills and/or green skills are central? Do they have a clear picture of this? A career counsellor will have to help the participant make an appropriate choice, and provide intensive personal guidance considering individual characteristics.

Career guidance

External career guidance
Depending on the participant's situation, the career counsellor may come from a public or private organization, such as an educational institution, an external occupational expert from public employment services, private job agencies and career guidance organizations, or HRD professionals from a company.

Research among adults who received career guidance from an external organization showed that the career counsellor must meet the following requirements (Bimrose & Barnes, 2008):

1. Provide access to specialist information
2. Provide insights, focus and clarification
3. Motivate
4. Promote self-confidence and self-awareness
5. Structure opportunities for reflection and discussion

This external professional also acts as a broker and must have short lines of communication with employers. They are a matchmaker who has knowledge of the labour market, a good network and, as a strong director, keeps everything together. In consultation with employers, work experience placements and traineeships can be offered, and attempts are also made to offer prospects for a career in a particular sector. This career counsellor must also have the opportunity to invite people to visit companies to find out more about them. This should give people the opportunity to gain different impressions and explore what they find interesting. This is in the mutual interest of employers and education. Once the participant has made a choice, a smooth transition to the educational programme is important.

It would be recommendable that career counsellors (whether from public employment services, NGO's, or companies) will be trained in gender awareness to:

1. Address occupational segregation
2. Encourage participants to explore non-traditional roles

3. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes in guidance practices
4. Motivate underrepresented groups with targeted success stories and role models

Moreover, gender-sensitive guidance should include reflection on how structural inequalities (e.g. gender pay gaps, care burdens, discrimination) might affect individual career choices and access to certain industries.

Internal career guidance
High level of sensitivity to individual differences is required, due to among others gender norms, beliefs, stereotypes, culture and personal history with special emphasis on professions traditionally not perceived as suitable for women or other underrepresented groups. Providing individual and tailored support to vulnerable groups (e.g. older women, migrants, adults with a lower proficiency in basic skills) seems to be necessary. It is important to assist them in removing structural barriers that may prevent them from completing learning pathways.

The career counsellor in the educational organization guides the participant during their education and also ensures a smooth transition from the participant to their final workplace. Aftercare is important in this regard.

A 5-step model of career guidance is conceivable for career guidance within the educational organization. A module can be developed for each step.

1. Self-awareness: Working on the participant's knowledge and ability to start their own career planning. High level of sensitivity to individual differences is required, due to gender norms, beliefs, stereotypes, culture, personal history etc.
2. Knowledge of professions: Providing information and tools to explore different professions that fit well with the participants' personalities and interests, with special emphasys on professions tradionally not perceived as suitable for women or other underrepresented groups.
3. Education and career paths: A module in which participants are guided to choose the most effective educational route to achieve their career ambitions, providing individual and tailored support to vulnerable groups (e.g. older women). It is important to assist them in removing structural barriers that may prevent them from completing learning pathways.
4. Real encounters: A module in which students meet professionals in the sector where they seem to want to work based on the first three steps. Opportunity for creation of inclusive networking with diverse professionals should be promoted.
5. Final decision: A module in which students gain insight into the value of making choices and developing action plans for their future careers based on the first four phases. Career counsellor support autonomy in making informed choices that are not limited by gender norms or expectations.

Mentoring and counselling

In addition to career guidance, mentoring and counselling are im-

portant during the learning process. These are other roles that the teacher has to fulfil, in addition to that of expert.

Mentoring

As a mentor, the teacher is the one who has experience and shows the participant the way. This can be during the training, at work or in daily life. It often involves practical help and giving tips.

Characteristics of this are:

- Focused on growth through sharing experience
- The mentor gives examples: 'This is how I approached it'
- Practical and positive: 'You can try this'
- Role model function

Counselling

As a counsellor, the teacher helps the participant to think for themselves about what they feel or want. It is more about talking and listening than giving advice.

Characteristics include:

- Focused on self-insight and dealing with problems
- The counsellor mainly asks questions: 'What do you think will help?'
- More focused on feelings, doubts, choices
- Less directive, more listening

From a gender mainstreaming perspective, mentoring and coun–

selling roles must be adapted to consider the different lived realities of women and men:

- **Mentoring**: Female participants benefit from visible role models and mentors who have navigated similar challenges (e.g. work–life balance, re-entry after career breaks).
- **Counselling**: Women may need additional space to reflect on confidence gaps, internalised bias, and external limitations.

Coaching skills

A key success factor to ensure that adults are able to engage in up- and reskilling is that they have access to guidance and counselling enabling them to make informed choices about up- and reskilling opportunities.

At the same time, career guidance and counselling are not only an asset for workers. They also are of the utmost importance to help companies struggling with labour shortages and to face the transition in Europe.

Career guidance, mentoring and counselling are all forms of coaching. According to research, seven skills are important for a coach to be able to provide successful guidance, namely (Asrowi et al., 2021):

1. Being actively present
2. Leading
3. Reflecting
4. Summarizing

5. Interpreting
6. Confronting
7. Informing and advising

Coaches should as well:

1. Recognize different communication styles shaped by gender
2. Challenge gendered assumptions about competence or suitability
3. Create a safe space for discussing sensitive issues like discrimination or harassment
4. Ensure that both men and women can equally access personalised, empowering support

References

Asrowi, Hanfif, M. & Setiawan, B. (2021). Career Development: The Role of Career Counsellor towards Job Counselling. *International Journal of Instruction 14*(1), 661 – 672.

Bimrose, J. & Barnes, S.-A. (2008). *Adult Career Progression Advancement: A Five Year Study Of The Effectiveness Of Guidance*. Coventry: Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick.

Gashi, L.J., Bërxulli, D., Konjufca, J. & Cakolli, L. (2023) Effectiveness of career guidance workshops on the career self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career goals of adolescents: an intervention study. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 28*(1), 2281421, Doi: 10.1080/02673843.2023.2281421.

Colophon

Title publication
Model for enhanced career guidance, counselling and mentoring
in the Reskilling Lab
A guideline for professionals

Authors
Mieke de Haan, Maurice de Greef, Daniela Grignoli
and Margherita Di Paolo

Date of publication
July 2025

Design
Mevrouw van Mulken