

Kick-off of the Erasmus+ Project “Skills for Life – Orientation Toolbox for Life Design”

Societal challenges with need of early intervention

Structurally high youth unemployment, school drop-out, skills shortages and mismatches are major challenges in Europe today. They affect the future of young people, our economies, and societies. Effective responses require cooperation, prevention and early intervention, supporting a smooth transition from education to work. Career guidance for older students is already producing considerable results. However, experience shows that earlier action supports and empowers young people even better to choose an educational and career path that suits them. Yet, teachers and educators are often ill-equipped to provide orientation to younger students.

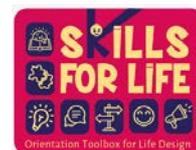
COVID 19 pandemic and its impact on the labour market for young Europeans

The COVID-19 pandemic strongly affected young people by interrupting their education and training or leaving them unemployed. Moreover, the pandemic is predicted to further accelerate changes to the labour market, which will require people to become more resilient, to have a lifelong learning attitude and solid life skills, from a young age onwards. So how can early guidance be provided to young people, while equipping them with the essential competences for their future education, work and life? What they require most are so-called “**Life Design Skills**”, meaning the knowledge, mind-set, and skills they will need to make informed choices concerning their education, and thereafter to develop their career in a working environment characterised by continuous change. The project “Skills for Life” aims to transmit these skills to young people by teachers, youth workers, career counsellors and other educational staff inside and outside schools.

“Skills for Life” – a European partnership creating synergies

Within the framework of a Strategic Partnership, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, the Goethe-Institut (DE), Aliseo Liguria (IT), Școala de Valori (RO), Tracé Brussel (BE) and the City of Mannheim (DE) are joining forces to create an “Orientation Toolbox” for educators to better equip young people aged 13-14 with “Life Design Skills”. The project will run from Autumn 2020 to Spring 2023 and is being supported by the BIBB - the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (DE) as an associated partner.

The members of the consortium have already been working together over the past three years within the [StartNet](#) initiative on young people’s transition from education to work in Europe, a cooperation of the Goethe-Institut and Stiftung Mercator. The “Skills for Life” project goes one step further, pooling diverse resources, experiences and expertise on orientation, career guidance, educational cooperation, value-based education, youth empowerment, vocational education and teacher training. New methods and material are jointly created, to be applied across Europe.



The Skills for Life Toolbox is jointly developed by all project partners in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Romania. It will be freely accessible on-line, easy to use beyond language or cultural barriers and translated into all partner languages as well as English. The toolbox includes:

- an on-line self-evaluation tool to increase students' self-awareness and how it relates to different professional profiles
- a board game, available both offline and on-line, to help students match their own characteristics and those of different job profiles in a playful way
- a series of teaching modules that educators can easily implement in their respective teaching environment, enhancing the awareness and skills of the students
- a half-day training to teach educators to deliver these activities, also available as on-line training modules
- an impact assessment methodology that will enable educators to easily measure the impact and efficacy of their interventions

Raising awareness among political decision-makers

Insights from piloting the toolbox with approximately 500 educators and 10 000 students will be channelled to decision-makers, thereby highlighting policies that support effective career orientation and Life Design Skills. Moreover, the project will raise awareness among stakeholders from local to European level for the need to introduce guidance and orientation to students at a younger age. As a result, educators will be equipped to deliver effective pre-career guidance to young people and empower them to choose an educational pathway that will lead them into suitable employment. "Skills for Life" prepares young people to envisage their future, to seize new opportunities and be more resilient to constant change and transitions. As such they can become drivers of a more inclusive, innovative and sustainable economy.

Voices from the partners

Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni, Regional Director Southwest Europe and Delegate for European Affairs, is delighted that the Goethe-Institut as the lead partner of this Erasmus+ project will be able to contribute to this important cause: *"Skills for Life" will enable teenagers to study more purposefully and envisage their future. We are confident that the project can advance more accessible guidance for students, thereby reducing school drop-out and skills mismatches.*

Dirk Grunert, Mayor of Education of the City of Mannheim is excited about the project-start: *The City of Mannheim is actively involved in many European initiatives and programmes. With the new "Skills for Life"-project, we aim to strengthen our strategic partnerships for vocational education and training in the upcoming years. Working together with partners in four European countries will help us to introduce new approaches to our daily work.*

Vincent Verrydt from Tracé Brussel highlights the importance of the project regarding its focus and target group: *Tracé Brussel already has a lot of experience in the transition from school to work with the "Jump to work project. With this new Erasmus + project we want*

to use our experience to prepare younger students for their future transitions and help to develop their lifeskills. We look forward to this international collaboration with partners, each having their specific expertise.

Silvia Bogdan, President of Școala de Valori, underlines career orientation for a world that is constantly changing: *With “Skills for Life”, young people will find out what job suits them, what skills they have and what they still need to become attractive candidates for the labour market of the future. The projects strengthens individual leadership in a collaborative context, it improves intergenerational dialogue, cultural and social intelligence to face continuous changes in technology, education and jobs.*

Ilaria Cavo, Regional Councillor for Education and VET of the Liguria Region highlights that *this European project represents a chance to share our best practice and to develop new content and collaborations for young people and future generations in our region. Orientation has always been a focus of our policies, even more during the current health emergency, to support young people and their families to understand new realities, challenges, but also to seize new opportunities.*

Being the leading German institute on vocational orientation and training, also the **BIBB** underlines that *early vocational orientation is an essential requirement for successful career choices. “Skills for Life“ will equip young people with relevant competencies to make these choices. We hope, the project will strengthen the importance of teaching such skills in the participating and further European countries.*

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