

GECS PEER EXPERT GROUP
**THEMATIC
REPORT 3**

**Digital Platforms in IAG
services:**

**Harnessing opportunities and
navigating challenges**



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1. Introduction

In the lifespan of the GeGS project (2021-2024) enormous (social) developments and technological changes have taken place with impact on IAG services, guidance practitioners and job seekers. The GeGS project started during the pandemic, a period, that enhanced and accelerated digital solutions, also in the area of IAG Services and in VET. In 2022, ChatGPT and other applications of generative AI emerged, which had an impact both on the “Jobiri” platform trialled in GeGS as well as on the way IAG services and practitioners provided advice. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the basic hypothesis of the GeGS project, according to which “an IAG digitalisation process is not only about new technology but needs to be flanked by systemic and participatory training opportunities on digital and IAG competences to ensure that effective IAG e-services will be designed client-centred, holistic and empowering”¹, is still valid. This thesis also runs like a red thread through this third report.

Against this background, the Expert Group's third thematic report is dedicated to the second component of the GeGS project, field trial 2, the introduction of an AI-based platform named “Jobiri”². However, it also examines the overall question of what opportunities and challenges digital solutions offer and what consequences can be drawn from them (Chapter 1 and 2).

The integration of generative AI into IAG services holds immense potential to revolutionize the field, making career guidance more efficient, personalized, and accessible. Future trends and emerging technologies in IAG services will have a strong impact for both IAG practitioners and job seekers. Generative AI will change rapidly and significantly roles, responsibilities and tasks of IAG practitioners – a process that is already underway (Chapter 3).

The impact of public sector reforms in VET and IAG services on the occupational profile of IAG practitioners (Chapter 4) completes this last report of the GeGS Expert Group. Amongst other public sector reforms must prioritize the integration of digital technologies in VET and IAG services.

The description of the Jobiri platform and the field trial as well as the outcomes, deliverables and findings of this experiment are available in other documents of the GeGS – project.

¹ Source: GeGS project – full proposal – Detailed Project Description Call EACEA /38/2019 – Part 3 – Summary of the project, p. 72

² <https://www.jobiri.com/>

2. Opportunities and Challenges of digital solutions in IAG

In the following, the potential of digital solutions and digital platforms for better and modernized IAG services, but also the challenges and prerequisites will be investigated.

Opportunities

Digital solutions offer a number of advantages and opportunities for IAG services and practitioners but need also technical and personal support.

Support systems encountered in the digitalisation of IAG services

Key support systems include robust IT infrastructure, user-friendly digital platforms, comprehensive training programs for IAG practitioners, and technical support for clients to ensure seamless access and usage of digital services.

A series of concrete technological systems combined with training and promotion materials can support the practitioners:

- digital resource libraries which provide job seekers and career guidance experts with access to a wealth of resources, including career guides, training materials, and self-help tools;
- collaborative tools which promote efficient collaboration and communication between IAG practitioners and candidates through specific features (i.e. “mask function”);
- client management systems which can help to keep track of client interactions, progress, and follow-ups, ensuring personalized and continuous support;
- e-learning platforms which offer structured learning paths and knowledge sharing to different IAG practitioners to clients, enhancing their skills and knowledge;
- training sessions which educate IAG practitioners on best practices
- promotional materials/tools which help in creating and managing marketing campaigns to promote e-guidance services. These tools can assist in reaching a broader audience through targeted advertising, email marketing, social media promotion and search engine marketing.

Reaching clients being not able to attend in-person meetings

Digital solutions such as video conferencing, messengers, chatbots, and online portals can provide flexible and accessible options for clients. These tools allow clients to receive guidance and support remotely, which is particularly beneficial for those with mobility issues, living in remote areas, or having time constraints.

The GeGS project focuses on young people. Digital responses may have to be adopted to the needs of other groups depending on their profile. There is a need for IAG services to consider how digital technologies can be used to support other groups as older job seekers.

Empowering clients

Digital tools which enable clients to take steps in their career path on their own can foster empowerment and increase self-confidence.

Cost Factors

The use of technology can both save money but also has a cost. For example, the opportunity to access online guidance can reduce the costs for clients for example the cost of travel for clients attending appointments. The use of digital technology also has a cost in terms of equipment, access to broadband/internet that should also be considered for both the services and the client. This is important for clients many of whom are on low incomes or on welfare support. IAG services should therefore consider both cost and saving factors for both the services and the clients in the way they use digital technology.

More efficient collaboration between IAG practitioners and clients

Digital tools facilitate real-time communication and information sharing, streamline administrative tasks through automated systems, and enable the use of collaborative platforms where both practitioners and clients can co-manage goals, documents, and progress tracking.

Overcoming languages barriers by translation tools

Tools, including AI-driven translation apps and real-time translation software, can significantly enhance communication between practitioners and clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds, ensuring that guidance and advice are clearly understood and effectively delivered.

Good balance between digital and in-person meetings

In each counselling setting, it has to be pinned down which content can be transported via digital tools and which content needs to be discussed and developed in personal exchange³. A hybrid approach that combines digital interactions with periodic in-person meetings can cater to various client needs and preferences. Digital meetings can handle routine consultations and follow-ups, while in-person meetings can be reserved for more complex cases or when a personal touch is required.

Using career guidance services (also) for VET matching

Digital career guidance services are often used for job matching, but it is less used for matching with VET courses also because there is no integrated VET course offer.

The implementation of skills intelligence and forecasting tools, a system for collecting and analysing labour market data, is useful in reducing skills mismatch. These tools help to effectively plan the provision of vocational education and training (VET), improve student guidance in choosing secondary and tertiary education pathways, and address users to retraining or re-skilling pathways in line with labour market needs.

³ See also chapter 2 „Conclusions“

(Generative) AI already helps special target groups and is time saving

The use of generative AI is described below (chapter 3) as a future trend. In fact, this is already a reality, especially for CVs and cover letters. This is an advantage for people with written expression difficulties. It also saves a great deal of time for counsellors, freeing up resources for other activities (support with writing cover letters and CVs usually accounts for a large proportion of counselling needs).

Challenges

Digital solutions in IAG services present users and practitioners with major challenges and are tied to certain prerequisites. These are of a technical, structural and personal nature.

Connectivity

Connectivity challenges include ensuring stable internet access, especially in rural or underserved areas, providing mobile-friendly solutions for clients relying on smartphones, and addressing bandwidth limitations that may affect the quality of video consultations and online interactions.

Minimum level of digital education/ skills among clients

Implementing digital literacy programs, offering introductory sessions on how to use digital platforms, providing easy-to-use interfaces, and offering ongoing technical support can help bridge the digital skills gap and ensure clients can effectively use online IAG services.

Users (practitioners and clients) need to feel at ease using a tool. This requires (i) either proper training on the tool or (ii) using existing tool people already know or (iii) designing tools similar to existing tool people already know.

New challenges for IAG – services

Structural changes include developing new protocols and workflows that integrate digital tools, redefining roles and responsibilities to include digital competencies, creating new metrics for assessing digital service effectiveness, and establishing data privacy and security measures to protect client information.

Using digital tools requires to redesign (or at least reconsider) the specific counselling process. Users (especially practitioners) need to be aware of the risk of discrimination inherent in digital tools. This requires the ability to detect wrong / biased information.

Need for continuous professional development for IAG practitioners to pace with technological advancements

Continuous professional development is crucial to keep practitioners up to date with the latest digital tools, methodologies, and best practices. It ensures that they can effectively use new technologies, provide high-quality services, and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Training programs, workshops, and certification courses focused on digital competencies can support this ongoing development.

3. Conclusions for further development for digital solutions in IAG services

- As already described above, digital tools cannot fully replace other (in-person) means of IAG counselling, in order to reach all kinds of target groups. However, it can increase efficiency in certain, consciously selected contexts as long as the demand of counselling is rising, and resources (e.g. more practitioners) is scarce.
- The synergy between digital IAG and in – person IAG can be improved by integrating digital tools that complement in-person interactions, such as using online scheduling, virtual follow-ups, and digital record-keeping. Ensuring that both digital and in-person services share the same goals and methodologies helps create a seamless client experience. Regular communication and feedback between digital and in-person teams are crucial.
- In this context, we should distinguish between content and components that are suitable for digitalisation and that are not. Administrative tasks, information dissemination, and routine consultations are suitable for digitalisation. Personalized guidance, complex problem-solving, and emotional support may still require in-person interactions. It's crucial to assess the effectiveness of digital versus in-person methods for different types of content and services.
- Digital platforms should fully exploit the potential of digitalisation and at the same time avoid disadvantaging certain less digitalised groups. This can be enabled by including user-friendly interfaces, multilingual support, and accessibility features to cater to less digitalised groups. Offering blended learning opportunities and providing digital literacy training can help bridge the gap. Additionally, maintaining alternative non-digital channels ensures inclusivity.
- Digital platforms which offer job searching tools are predominantly used by young people who are already actively seeking for jobs (or VET or continuous training). Those who are far away from the labour market are hard to reach and to motivate for such solutions. IAG practitioners play a crucial role in bridging this gap.
- Given the fact that nearly all young people in Europe use smart phones and social media (Instagram, TikTok and other), a potential way could be to offer digital guidance solutions via smartphone app and promote such solutions in social media, perhaps with the help of respective influencers.

- To convince the target group of disadvantaged young people, to use digital solutions, it's essential to highlight the benefits, such as convenience, accessibility, and personalized support. Providing demonstrations, user training, and continuous support can ease the transition. Gathering and acting on user feedback ensures the platform meets their needs and expectations.
- It is just as important to provide anonymised access in order to overcome barriers to counselling (e.g. due to fear, data protection reasons, or entering personal data as additional work, which many young people find difficult due to distraction, etc.).
- Potential risks of discrimination through digital solutions, particularly with regard to AI, can be mitigated by implementing transparent AI algorithms, regularly auditing these systems for biases, and ensuring that diverse data sets are used for training. Involving stakeholders from various backgrounds in the design and monitoring process also helps to identify and address discriminatory practices. Continuous monitoring and human oversight ensure that AI complements rather than replaces human judgement.

4. Future trends and emerging Technologies in IAG services

(Generative) AI can have a strong impact on IAG Services for both IAG practitioners and job seekers. Some of the future trends described in the table below are already reality. In many cases, AI has already found its way into the everyday counselling practice of young people and other target groups. Considering relevant processes of CV creation/optimisation, skills assessment, career guidance material creation, LinkedIn profile creation, interview preparation as examples, it is possible to highlight the following considerations and related impact:

Process	Technology	Impact for Job seekers	Impact for practitioners
CV Creation and Optimization	Generative AI can create, edit, and optimize CVs tailored to specific job descriptions.	<p>Efficiency: saves time by generating professional-quality CVs quickly.</p> <p>Customization: enhances personalization by aligning CV content with job requirements and industry standards.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Assists those with limited writing skills or language barriers, ensuring they can present their</p>	<p>Focus Shift: allows practitioners to focus more on strategic guidance rather than CV formatting and basic edits.</p> <p>Enhanced Services: provides practitioners with advanced tools to offer more precise and impactful advice.</p>

		qualifications effectively.	
Skills Assessment and Gap Analysis	AI can assess skills through various methods and identify knowledge or profile gaps of the job seekers	<p>Accurate insights: identifies strengths and areas for improvement, helping job seekers to target their development efforts effectively.</p> <p>Personal development: facilitates personalized learning paths and training recommendations.</p> <p>Market readiness: Ensures job seekers understand their fit for specific roles and industries.</p>	<p>Data-Driven Guidance: empowers practitioners with detailed skill profiles of their clients, allowing for more informed advice.</p> <p>Resource allocation: helps practitioners allocate resources and training programs more effectively based on the needs of their clients.</p>
Career Guidance Material Creation	Generative AI can create customized career guidance materials such as job search strategies, career development plans, industry reports, and training modules.	<p>Personalized Resources: receives tailored career guidance materials that cater to their specific needs, industries, and career stages.</p> <p>Updated Information: access to the latest industry trends, job market insights, and best practices compiled by AI, ensuring relevance and accuracy.</p> <p>Comprehensive Support: provides a wide range of resources covering various aspects of career development, from job search techniques to professional growth strategies.</p>	<p>Content Creation Efficiency: AI can generate high-quality content quickly, allowing practitioners to provide up-to-date materials without extensive manual effort.</p> <p>Focus on Customization: practitioners can fine-tune AI-generated materials to better suit individual client needs and local job market conditions.</p> <p>Scalability: enables practitioners to offer a broader range of resources to a larger audience, enhancing the reach and impact of their services.</p>

<p>LinkedIn Profile creation / optimization</p>	<p>Generative AI tools can automate the creation and optimization of LinkedIn profiles, ensuring they are aligned with industry standards and job market trends</p>	<p>Enhanced visibility: AI-generated profiles can be optimized with the right keywords, skills, and experiences to increase visibility in recruiter searches.</p> <p>Professional Appeal: ensures that profiles are professionally written, consistent, and error-free, improving first impressions with potential employers.</p> <p>Time efficiency: saves job seekers time by automating the process of updating and maintaining their LinkedIn profiles</p>	<p>Strategic focus: practitioners can shift their focus from writing and editing profiles to providing strategic advice on how to leverage LinkedIn for networking and job searching.</p> <p>In-depth Customization: with AI handling the basics, practitioners can spend more time on customizing profiles for niche industries or specific career goals.</p> <p>Data Utilization: practitioners can use AI-generated data on LinkedIn profile performance to give more informed guidance on improving online professional presence.</p>
<p>Interview Preparation</p>	<p>AI Simulators can provide questions and answers based on sector, company, role, etc.</p>	<p>Practice opportunities: offers realistic and varied interview scenarios for practice.</p> <p>Immediate feedback: provides instant, actionable feedback on performance, body language, and communication skills.</p> <p>Confidence Building: helps in building confidence and reducing interview anxiety through repeated practice.</p>	<p>Scalability: allows practitioners to scale their services, handling more clients without compromising on quality.</p> <p>Quality Improvement: enables practitioners to refine their coaching techniques based on AI-driven insights into common interview pitfalls and strengths.</p>

Automated matching of advice seekers with jobs or qualification offers	Automated matching algorithms	AI makes placements even more accurate, as information deficits are reduced if counsellors are able to provide the AI with the right information	The role of counsellors is changing in that they are increasingly acting as a kind of intermediary or moderator between the person seeking advice and the machine.
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The integration of generative AI into IAG services holds immense potential to revolutionize the field, making career guidance more efficient, personalized, and accessible. However, it is crucial to address the ethical, training, and quality assurance aspects to ensure that the benefits of AI are fully realized in an inclusive and responsible manner. In particular, it is always very important to properly manage 4 key areas:

1. **Ethics**: it is important that AI systems are free from biases related to gender, race, or socio-economic status and that client data and confidential information are properly safeguarded
2. **Skill Development**: ensuring that IAG practitioners are trained to effectively use AI tools and interpret their outputs is key.
3. **Quality Assurance**: continuously monitoring and improving the accuracy of AI-generated recommendations and feedback are as important as the introduction of these tools.
4. **Human Touch**: balancing AI automation with the essential human element of empathy and personalized support can have a tremendous impact on job seekers success.

The role of Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) practitioners is poised for significant transformation with the integration of AI technologies. As these tools become more prevalent, the responsibilities and tasks of IAG practitioners will evolve in various impactful ways. Here’s a detailed look at how their roles and related tasks might change:

Shift from routine tasks to strategic guidance:

- **Current Role**: presently, IAG practitioners devote a considerable portion of their time to routine tasks. These include editing and formatting CVs, scheduling appointments, and conducting initial skill assessments. These activities, while essential, can be time-consuming and repetitive.

- **Future Role:** AI can take over these routine tasks, streamlining administrative processes. This shift will allow practitioners to concentrate more on providing strategic and personalized career guidance. They can invest their time in understanding clients' unique circumstances, aspirations, and challenges, offering nuanced advice that requires human judgment and empathy. This deeper engagement can significantly enhance the effectiveness of career counselling.

Data-driven decision making:

- **Current role:** currently, decisions made by IAG practitioners are often based on their experience and manually gathered information. This approach, though valuable, can be subjective and limited by the scope of available data.
- **Future role:** In the future, practitioners will leverage AI-generated insights and data analytics to make more informed decisions. AI can analyse vast amounts of data to identify trends, forecast job market demands, and provide detailed profiles of individual clients. Practitioners can use these insights to tailor their advice more precisely, ensuring it aligns with current job market realities and specific client needs.

Enhanced client interaction and engagement:

- **Current role:** interaction with clients today is primarily through face-to-face meetings, supplemented by occasional digital communication. While effective, this model can limit the frequency and depth of engagement.
- **Future role:** AI tools will enable practitioners to engage clients through a seamless blend of digital and in-person interactions. Continuous engagement can be facilitated via chatbots, virtual reality sessions, and interactive e-learning platforms, providing ongoing support beyond traditional scheduled sessions. This hybrid approach ensures clients receive consistent, timely assistance and can access resources whenever needed.

Focus on emotional and psychological support:

- **Current role:** emotional and psychological support are integral to the role of IAG practitioners, but time constraints due to administrative tasks can limit the extent of this support.
- **Future role:** with administrative tasks handled by AI, practitioners can dedicate more time to the emotional and psychological aspects of career development. They can focus on building clients' confidence, helping them overcome anxieties, and providing motivational support. This holistic approach addresses the broader spectrum of career-related challenges, fostering a more supportive and encouraging environment.

Lifelong learning and development:

- Current role: currently, practitioners often focus on providing immediate career advice rather than facilitating long-term career development.
- Future role: practitioners will increasingly guide clients in lifelong learning and continuous skill development. AI can track clients' progress over time and recommend ongoing education and training opportunities. Practitioners can then provide the motivational and strategic support needed for sustained career growth, helping clients adapt to evolving industry demands and pursue continuous personal and professional development.

The rapid advancement of AI technology means that IAG practitioners must commit to ongoing professional development. Staying updated with the latest AI tools and technologies through continuous training will be essential.

Practitioners need to understand how to effectively use these tools, from basic functionalities to more advanced features, to maximize their potential. This continuous learning will enable practitioners to leverage AI to its fullest potential, allowing them to provide cutting-edge services.

Moreover, as digital platforms become more prevalent, the creation and curation of digital content will become a significant part of an IAG practitioner's role. This includes developing webinars, online courses, and resource libraries tailored to various aspects of career development.

Practitioners will need to ensure that these materials are up-to-date, engaging, and easily accessible to clients. High-quality digital content can provide valuable support to clients, offering them resources they can refer to at their own pace. This approach not only extends the reach of IAG services but also provides clients with ongoing support and learning opportunities.

The future of career guidance lies in a blend of digital and in-person services. Practitioners will need to design and implement effective hybrid models that maximize the benefits of both approaches. This means managing virtual consultations, online workshops, and in-person meetings seamlessly.

Effective hybrid models provide flexibility, allowing clients to choose the mode of interaction that best suits their needs and circumstances. By offering comprehensive access to career support through various channels, practitioners can ensure that their services are inclusive and adaptable to different client preferences.

Despite the technological advancements, the human connection remains vital in career guidance. Practitioners will focus on building and maintaining strong relationships with their clients through empathy, active listening, and personalized interactions.

While AI can handle many tasks, it cannot replicate the nuanced understanding and emotional support provided by a human advisor. Strengthening these relationships involves understanding clients' individual needs, aspirations, and challenges, and offering tailored support that resonates on a personal level.

This human touch is essential for providing meaningful and supportive career guidance.

5 The impact of public sector reforms on in VET and IAG services on the occupational profile of IAG practitioners

In this chapter, we would first like to refer to the Memorandum of Understanding (as a further deliverable of the GeGS Expert Group), which was drawn up and signed by the public partners of the GeGS project and the Expert Group and previously discussed with the other experts.

The following comments go beyond this and present options for action for the public partners.

Public sector reforms must prioritize the integration of digital technologies in VET and IAG services. IAG practitioners now need to develop strong digital skills to use online platforms, digital tools, and AI-driven applications effectively.

With a shift towards lifelong learning as a policy priority, IAG practitioners should be expected to support clients in continuous skill development and career planning. This requires practitioners to stay updated with current labour market trends and educational opportunities.

Reforms must also push for more personalized and client-centred services. IAG practitioners need to tailor their advice and support to meet individual client needs, considering their unique backgrounds, skills, and career aspirations (digitally or personally alike).

Public sector reforms must emphasize the importance of data collection and analysis to improve service delivery. IAG practitioners need to be proficient in using data to inform their guidance practices.

The public sector must take a proactive role in co-developing digital solutions and sharing job market data, ensuring that this data is protected and widely accessible. This collaborative approach offers several key benefits:

1. Collaborative development of solutions: Involving public authorities in the co-development of digital and AI based solutions fosters a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives contribute to more robust and effective systems. This cooperation can lead to innovative solutions that are tailored to the needs of the public.

2. Protection of citizen data: ensuring that the information and data of citizens are protected is paramount. Public authorities can implement stringent data protection regulation, ensuring that personal data is handled with the utmost care and in compliance with legal standards. This not only protects individual privacy but also reinforces trust in public institutions.
3. Public interest focus: data collected by public entities can be utilized to analyse and address public interests rather than private ones. This ensures that the development of AI systems and digital solutions aligns with the broader societal good. By focusing on public interests, authorities can create more effective and equitable career guidance systems that serve all citizens.
4. Enhanced access to information: Public Authorities can ensure wider access to job market information by sharing data transparently. This democratizes information, allowing individuals and private institutions to benefit from accurate and comprehensive job market information. Improved access to information can lead to better career guidance systems and a more dynamic workforce.

By taking a leadership role in these areas, public authorities can significantly contribute to the development of better guidance systems that are secure, equitable, and aligned with the public interest.

With this third thematic report and the "Memorandum of Understanding" of the public partners (see final report and GeGS website <https://goodeguidance.eu/en/>), the GeGS Expert Group concludes its activities during the project period and is looking forward to receiving feedback on this and the two previous thematic reports.

The modernisation and digitalisation of IAG services and the corresponding training of guidance practitioners will continue and the partners in the GeGS project will continue to make their contribution to this.

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