



## IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND LEGACY REPORT

„GEGS – GOOD E-GUIDANCE STORIES “  
626152-EPP-1-2020-2-DE-EPPKA3-PI-POLICY  
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**Prepared for:**

MetropolisNet: European Metropolis Employment Network EEIG  
Kronenstraße 6  
10117 Berlin – Germany  
Contact: Elena Grilli, managing director  
[elena.grilli@metropolisnet.eu](mailto:elena.grilli@metropolisnet.eu)  
[info@metropolisnet.eu](mailto:info@metropolisnet.eu)

**Prepared by abif:**

Andrea Egger, Wolfgang Mayer and Claudia Liebeswar  
Contact: Andrea Egger; +43 699 11881666  
Mail: [egger@abif.at](mailto:egger@abif.at)

abif – analysis, consulting and interdisciplinary research  
abif – analyse, beratung, interdisziplinäre forschung  
Einwanggasse 12 / top 5, 1140 Wien  
Tel: 43 - 1 - 522 48 73 11  
[www.abif.at](http://www.abif.at)  
ATU48956704  
IBAN: AT111200024211619500  
BIC/SWIFT: BKAUATWW

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## 1. BACKGROUND

The final impact and legacy report of the "Good E-Guidance Stories (GeGS)" project is prepared in response to the invitation by MetropolisNet. It covers the project's effectiveness, relevance, broader impact, and legacy.

*The GeGS project, initiated in March 2021 and concluding on 30th June 2024, aims to modernize Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector across Europe. The project integrates advanced AI-driven e-guidance tools and a multilingual e-learning framework, aiming to achieve systemic impact at multiple governance levels.*

*The main goals of GeGS are:*

- *Providing Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioners with a comprehensive, engaging, and user-friendly digital training framework.*
- *Introducing advanced e-guidance tools based on artificial intelligence.*

The evaluation carries out the final impact assessment as a summative, external assessment, offering specific recommendations for the further use and application of the project's outcomes after its close.

abif has not been a project partner of MetropolisNet and was not involved in GeGS so far and therefore meets the conditions of an external, independent evaluator.

## 2. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

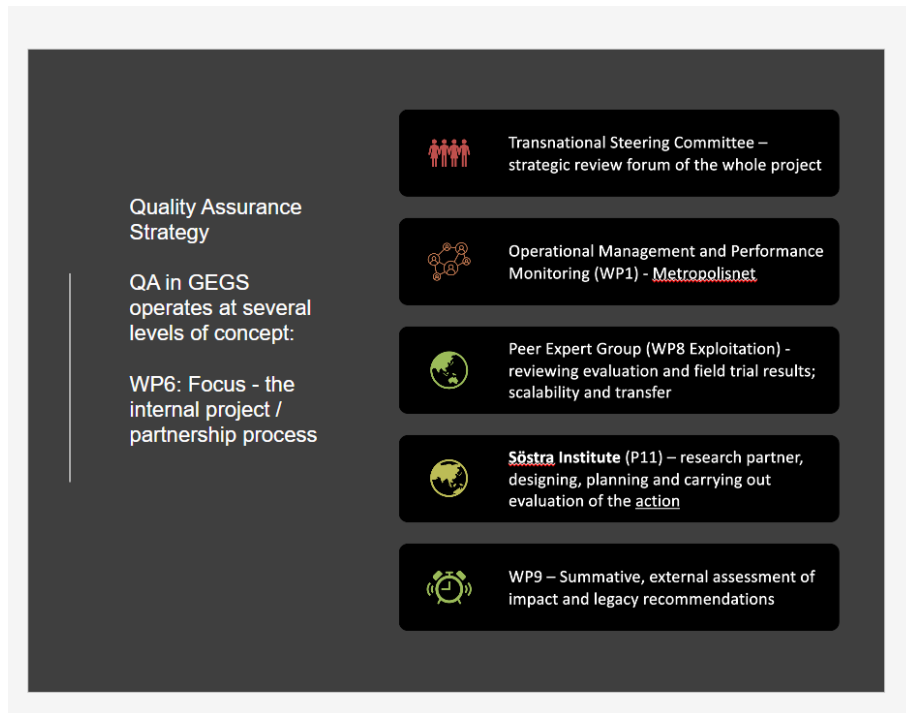
In line with the original proposal and the project's Quality Assurance Plan (QAP), the external "Impact and Legacy Assessment" (WP9: Impact Assessment and External Evaluation) covers the following summarized aspects:

- **Innovation** – the innovative nature of the project theme and products in accordance with the KA3 Call objectives, with specific reference to the IAG function in VET systems, professional development of IAG professionals and system innovation through introduction of highly innovative ICT systems in their provision.
- **Validity** – how valid and relevant are the project outcomes, as short term and measurable **impacts**, to the overall problem and challenges in VET reform that the GEGS project set out to address.
- **Transnationality** – the impact of the project on a transnational basis, including dissemination of results and products.
- **Dissemination** – the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy to inform key stakeholders on the quality, relevance and effectiveness of activities and results.
- **Exploitation and legacy**– in terms of estimating longer-term impacts, the assessment will also consider how effective will GEGS be in going forward and the necessary and on-going legacy actions required to embed ongoing legacy and evolution of the reforms within the ambit of the key public authorities and, where relevant, regional/national/European decision makers and stakeholders to adopt, adapt or apply the project outcomes and impact upon the policy-informing ambitions.

Building on these key topics and in coordination with GeGS management, an evaluation process was developed, defining a matrix of evaluation fields, evaluation questions, indicators, and measures, that align with the project's objectives and expected outcomes. The core areas of the project were evaluated using the written documentation provided by GeGS management, including internal evaluation reports and - where possible – already collected data. Additionally, an explorative approach addressed questions related to future development and usage. In order not to produce redundancy of work, that has already been done by the management and internal evaluation, the evaluation team used reports and project documentation to answer as many questions as possible. However, in line with the GeGS proposal, the focus of the external summative evaluation is specifically on the impact of project outcomes, and on formulating critical observations and reflections.

The specific role of the external evaluator as a core element of the Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) by Rinova is summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Core elements of the GEGS Quality Assurance Strategy



Various evaluation questions and corresponding indicators had been proposed in the evaluation application (see Table 1). The final evaluation focused primarily on the fourth thematic block (highlighted in colour in Table 1), in alignment with WP7 ("Dissemination and communication") and WP8 ("Exploitation") of the project proposal. Other aspects are covered by other internal evaluation and had therefore been less of a focus in the external evaluation. However, these were also scrutinised.

**Table 1: Impact Assessment Framework: Evaluation questions and methods**

		<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Methods/Data Resource</b>
<b>Innovation &amp; Validity</b>		How useful/relevant were the methods, products, and AI tools for the Stakeholders according to their needs and in modernizing IAG?	Document analysis: Results of former internal evaluation (Rinova) Screening of products by 3 external evaluators from abif-team Participant observation of “International Policy Practice Workshop” (Online survey with participants of final conference)
		How many IAG practitioners were directly and indirectly involved in the project (in comparison to national/regional number of IAG practitioners)	Document analysis. National number of IAG practitioners and changes of % of advanced e-guidance use in IAG in relation over time (as far as provided on regional/national level or estimated by partners)
		Micro-level: How effectively does the GeGS training framework improve the knowledge, attitudes and skills of IAG practitioners? What is the measurable impact of the GeGS project on the professional practices of IAG practitioners? To what extent could young (unemployed) people benefit?	Document analysis and review of existing data, e.g. percentage of IAG practitioners with improved skills (pre-post-design of evaluation of field experiments) or reporting new competencies/attitudes post-training. Size of impact/effect strength (Possibility of secondary analyses of field trial results will be discussed with internal evaluation partner Soestra.)
	<b>Transnationality</b>	Meso-level: How effective were the provided tools and the participative method of co-creation and transnational learning/adopting to address the need for innovation on regional and organization level?	Document analysis After Action Review (workshop at final steering committee meeting with all partners) Evaluation workshop with steering group members.
	<b>Transnationality</b>	Macro-Level: How effective were the provided tools and the participative method of co-creation and transnational learning/adopting to address the need for innovation on IAG-systems? To what extent have the products / has the project enhanced the different guidance function, already? Are the project’s components suitably adapted to the varying contexts of different European regions?	Document analysis and evaluation workshop with steering group members. 3 interviews with experts from involved governance level: Autonomous Region of Sardinia (IT), Senate of Berlin – Integration and Labour Market Department (DE), Periferia Thessalias (EL) Document analysis and review of existing data: number of adaptations made to tailor the project outputs to different regional needs (with respect to the number of reported needs). Additionally qualitative analysis of adaption.

		<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Methods/Data Resource</b>
Legacy	Lasting impact after project completion	<p>What systemic changes has the project initiated at the EU, national, regional, and local levels?</p> <p>How is the project influencing ongoing policy and practice in the VET and IAG sectors beyond the project's duration?</p> <p>To what extent did the project have a lasting impact on VET systems (according to the theory of change pursued in the proposal)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IAG provision transformation and digital culture enhanced</li> <li>- IAG staff become agents for innovation and quality in VET</li> <li>- Better relevance to young people needs</li> </ul> <p>Cooperation enhanced, despite different VET governance systems and structures</p>	<p>Document analysis: Reports from policy changes or enhancements influenced by the project's findings at various governmental levels.</p> <p>Estimation of impact on different levels by project partners at the After Action Review (workshop at final steering committee meeting with all partners)</p> <p>3 interviews with partners from governance level and 3 interviews with representatives from MetropolisNet, Rinova and Soestra</p> <p>Online survey participants of final conference (?)</p>
		<p>What debarbs the use of the materials/tools? Is there a need for ongoing adoption (of tools) and how could it be provided?</p>	<p>Exploring (open question in interview / focus group)</p>
Dissemination	Lasting impact after project completion	<p>Dissemination: How effectively are the results and findings of the GeGS project being disseminated, communicated, and utilized by stakeholders on the local, regional, national and European level?</p> <p>To what extent did the chosen means of communication (website, social media, newsletters, brochures/leaflets, press releases, conferences, networking activities) reach the target groups?</p>	<p>Exploring (open question in interview / focus group)</p>
Exploitation		<p>Exploitation: Through which kind of policy actions and reforms will the positive results be up-scaled, mainstreamed and multiplied?</p> <p>To what extent were the Peer Expert's Group, the Memorandum of Understanding and Policy Practice Workshops useful for the exploitation of the GeGS project?</p> <p>Did all the workshops take place? Did the relevant people take part?</p>	<p>3 interviews with representatives from MetropolisNet, Rinova and Soestra</p> <p>Review of existing data: estimation of users and peer group; usage statistics of the platform analytics to assess engagement levels</p>

### 3. METHODS

Our mixed-methods approach included:

**a) Desk Research, review of documents:** Within GeGS, intensive quality control and quality review took place. abif reviewed the comprehensive project documents, including the proposal, progress reports, and internal evaluation reports (e.g. reports concerning the results of the Peer Expert Group – PEG) as well as publications from the Good e-Guidance Stories library on the project website (<https://goodeguidance.eu/en/library/>) and Thematic Reports and the Memorandum of Understanding of the Peer Experts' Group.

The evaluation team attempted to answer most of the questions listed in Table 1 regarding the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the project by analysing the project documents assigned to individual work packages, including the development of the digital competence curriculum, the technicalities of the Jobiri platform, methodological aspects of the quasi-experimental approach and field trials, as well as project management and internal evaluation. As the project employed a quasi-experimental design, a variety of generated data, including user statistics and participant numbers, were taken into account in order to determine the extent to which the project goals have been achieved. Finally, abif was given access to documents regarding the dissemination and exploitation strategy, including the reports produced by the Peer Expert Group (see the next item b) for this).

**b) Assessment of final products by 3 members of abif evaluation team:** To validate the results, abif further determined which specific products (tools) were created as part of the project, tested the existing tools and reflected potential use cases and potential of further dissemination within the evaluation team and the interviewed stakeholders.

- ❖ **Jobiri:** Jobiri (<https://www.jobiri.com/>) is an existing AI system that offers automated creation and enhancement of CVs and application letters (CV and cover letter builder), helps finding job offers and provides digital career counselling (e.g. interview training and learning new job search strategies with the help of an e-learning system). During the GeGS project, the tool was tested and adapted to regional contexts / community of practitioners.
- ❖ **Moodle platform:** An online learning platform on Moodle (<https://www.goodeguidance.cloud/>) for IAG practitioners with 19 interactive case studies corresponding to 19 'Professionalising Career Guidance' competences (Cedefop) was newly developed, including a project hub and thematic tracks and learning paths.
- ❖ **Website and library:** The GeGS Website and library (<https://goodeguidance.eu/en/library/>) was newly launched, including digital case study learning resources, the IAG Competences Framework, the AI-based GeGS platform, field trial findings, reports from desk research and thematic reports from the Peer Expert Group.

In addition, the following products were to be disseminated as part of the dissemination strategy (WP7):



- ❖ Social media content
- ❖ Project newsletters
- ❖ Project brochures
- ❖ Press releases
- ❖ Promotional materials
- ❖ Promotional Video

Finally, regarding the Exploitation Strategy (WP8), the following actions were carried out:

- ❖ Compilation of 3 Thematic Reports by the Peer Experts' Groups
- ❖ Organisation of 7 Policy Practice Workshops, one per partner country, except for Germany and Italy where 2 Workshops were carried out (respectively in October 2022 in Cagliari and June 2024 in Milan and Nov 2023 and May 2024 in Berlin) bringing together policy makers, IAG practitioners and young people. Most workshop had transnational scope, rather than only local or National (Cagliari in October 2022; Dublin and London in October 2023; Berlin in May 2024)
- ❖ Preparation and sign-off of a Memorandum of Understanding by the three public authorities (ministry partners)
- ❖ Participation of project partners in fora and external events to present GeGS
- ❖ Organisation of a final conference for a wider audience

**c) Key informant interviews:** To assess the impact on policy level, 3 interviews with partners from governance were conducted (1 in person, 2 in writing). Another 3 personal key informant interviews with representatives from MetropolisNet, Rinova and Soestra were conducted focusing on products, impacts and lessons learned. Abif conducted the interviews online between June and July 2024. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants of the final transnational project events from May 28 to 30. Interviews were recorded, and evaluators transcribed the guided interviews verbatim (with help of transcription tools) to ensure accuracy in analysis and to have easy reference during the process. The material was categorized and evaluated using topic analysis.

**d) After Action Review (AAR):** After Action Reviews provide a framework for teams to reflect on their performance in a project by examining their actions, decisions, and outcomes. For the evaluation the method was used to explore the (hidden) impacts, potential further use and legacy of the project on different levels. The AAR conducted as part of the final transnational project events focused on 2 objectives:

- a. Reflection on the milestones and the journey with the most important lessons learned and insights.
- b. The survey of the effects: What were/are the impacts on you, your organization, and policy? What are long lasting effects? What can emerge from GeGS?

For objective a), project partners, practitioners and representatives reflected in small groups of 5-6 people on the 'project journey', which was symbolised as colourful path on wallpapers in the room. This was called 'GeGS harvesting'.

For objective b), the project partners divided into 3 groups and discussed the questions with the help of moderators and wrote down their results. There was a specific need to discuss the whereabouts of the Moodle platform (GeGS Cloud), so one group worked on this issue.

- e) **Participant observation:** The Policy Practice Workshop dedicated to IAG practitioners on May 29th and the final conference on May 30<sup>th</sup> was also used for participant observation.
- f) **Questionnaires:** Additionally, a short online survey was conducted to evaluate the impact of the final conference for guests. Questions focused on the key insights or knowledge gained from the conference, the extent to which the conference influenced the participants' approach to professional IAG practices and contributed to the professional development of IAG (see Annex). The questionnaire was provided during the event. At the end of June, a second online questionnaire was sent to the project group to determine the effects of the project on the participants' knowledge about key concepts and to ask them about the presumed legacy of the project.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. INNOVATION AND VALIDITY

According to the original full proposal, the external impact assessment should focus on its innovation and validity, i.e. the "innovative nature of the project theme and products in accordance with the KA3 Call objectives, with specific reference to the IAG function in VET systems, professional development of IAG professionals and system innovation through introduction of highly innovative ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) systems in their provision". Abif determined the project outcomes and assessed its novelty, benefits and relevance. Additionally, we assessed the validity of project outcomes to determine "how valid and relevant the project outcomes [are], as short term and measurable impacts, to the overall problem and challenges in VET reform that the GEGS project set out to address." (GeGS proposal).

#### 4.1.1. OVERALL NOVELTY, BENEFITS AND RELEVANCE OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

As a first step, abif scrutinised the final products that were either newly created or adapted to new contexts during the GeGS project. As a second step, abif analysed innovative characteristics of the process that lead to the project results.

#### ICT IN IAG PRACTICE: TESTING NEW TOOLS

The AI system "Jobiri" (<https://www.jobiri.com/>) by the Italian software developers Claudio and Roberto Sponchioni offers automated creation and enhancement of CVs and application letters (CV and cover letter builders), helps finding job offers (automated screening of job offers) and provides digital career counselling (e.g. interview training and learning new job search strategies with the help

of an e-learning system). During the GeGS project, the tool was tested and adapted to regional contexts and tried out by the community of VET and IAG practitioners in Berlin, Sardinia and Thessaly.

The overall innovativeness and usability of the tool can be confirmed. Interview partners highlight the usefulness of the tool for the job searching and career planning processes of IAG clients and service providers. Some policy representatives argue that the tool is one of the first of its kind and that advanced e-guidance tools are not yet widely used among IAG practitioners in their respective regions. Insofar, the tool can be considered a pioneer in the field of VET and IAG services. During the project period different tools were developed and generative AI made a major change in IAG practice. In the reflection workshop some participants from policy level and practitioners mentioned similar tools, that fit better the needs of their clients in the meantime. But overall, the main benefits of testing the different tools Jobiri offers for clients, IAG-organisations and practitioners (and indirectly to employers) led to a better understanding of the benefits of these tools, their restrictions and usability. So, the testing clearly enhanced the digital skill of stakeholders to critical analyse the potential use cases on a profound and self-experienced basis.

Members of the evaluation team of abif created a Jobiri account and tested the tool to become familiar with its functions and identify potential use cases, as well as issues in its application. The application process on the Jobiri website is straightforward and CVs and cover letters are easily created. The website was available in German during evaluation phase but changed languages service later. For the involved institutions a Jobiri version in their language will be available as long as partners want to use it. During the project phase, the whole Jobiri (job matching and counselling) platform was translated to German and Greek to be able to be tested in detail not only by IAG staff but also with real clients (NEETs): Language and translation problems as well as restricted access rights to administrative documents and data (job adverts of public employment service could not be used for matching in Germany) are recurring themes in the written documentation and are also articulated by the project partners. The goal was thus seen as very ambitious (or even “overambitious”) by some interviewees. This is one of the reasons why the use of Jobiri will not be widely integrated in Germany and Greece after the projects close, and as Gian Mario Cossu from the Autonomous Region of Sardinia points out, the Jobiri platform is difficult to integrate even into Sardinia’s system of public administration. Due to procedural issues in the acquisition of public sector services, other providers than Jobiri could be commissioned with implementing the best digital tools in IAG provision. His colleague, Corrado Ballocco adds that “public operators suffer from the specific constraint of not being able to use the software as they wish but only those foreseen by [public] management.” So, constraints on the organizational level (e.g. data protection issues) must be considered to adapt an existing program/tool for other employment markets and employment logics.

Some resentments from IAG clients and practitioners were reported at the After Action Reflection Workshop concerning the use of Jobiri. In the reflection the participants came to the conclusion, that this was not only a sign of mistrust for uploading personal data on platform but also a sign of mistrust against public labour market administration in general and a lack of motivation of some practitioners. “How can you motivate a client to use a tool if you are not motivated as a IAG practitioner?” This indicates the need for a consequent integration of IAG practitioners in the development of tools on the one hand (as already mentioned in the main hypotheses of the GeGS field experiment) and on the other hand, the (time) resources for the staff, to experiment with new tools during working time.

In addition to technical and legal problems concerning the use of public data, some general limitations in the application of digital and AI tools in everyday IAG practices are articulated by project partners. According to Silke Kriwoluzky (SÖSTRA), who conducted the field trials as part of the quasi-experimental design of the project, the tool tends to support clients who are already digitally-savvy and search only for a job, whereas people with multiple problems needed a different kind of support according to their needs and requirements. One main outcome from the project was that the tools must be sought for the target group and not the other way around. More important than the right tool is a critical questioning of the advisory process to learn where it is best integrated, how it can be brought to the clients, which steps it can omit, which additional steps need to be taken and what all this means for the workflows.

#### CURRICULUM DEVELOPEMENT AND **LEARNING PLATFORM** (GEGS TRAINING FRAMEWORK)

In WP1, a digital competence curriculum framework based on competences laid out in the Cedefop Professionalising Career Guidance Framework and the DigiComp framework was developed. This framework was the basis of the newly developed interactive online learning platform on Moodle for IAG practitioners, with 19 interactive case studies corresponding to the 19 'Professionalising Career Guidance' competences (Cedefop), of which 15 existing stories were digitally enhanced and transformed into interactive learning tools and made more accessible and 4 further stories were completely newly developed. The platform also includes a project hub as well as thematic tracks and learning paths. Abif created an account and was able to test the new platform reviewing its resources. The evaluation team was also given access to the Good e-Guidance Stories Case Studies and videos featuring the stories. The evaluators perceive the learning platform and stories to be engaging and valuable for the work of IAG practitioners.

The learning processes in and through the GeGS project is praised by all interview partners as being highly productive and useful. For example, Corrado Ballocco from the Autonomous Region of Sardinia shares his general opinion on the GeGS learning environment: "The main characteristic of the training proposed within the GeGS activities lies in the fact that it is configured as peer education, very concrete and based on real case studies, perhaps coming from different national contexts and in any case also referable to specific and daily situations. More than theory, therefore, it is practice (even shared and analysed together) that makes professionals more capable. (...) The training course conducted has certainly further developed digital skills and skills relating to the applied use of Artificial Intelligence (however basic). Another skill gained is undoubtedly that relating to a greater knowledge of the current labour markets and local training but also on a community basis. A final reminder concerns transversal skills (problem solving, decision making, team building and working, social and communication skills, adaptability, etc) also exercised in relation to the training sessions shared remotely. (...) In my opinion, one aspect of the project's success lies in the fact that it was possible to exchange views between operators from different national contexts and that there is a common teaching platform with the further possibility of setting up a functioning and effective community of practice. Without forgetting the possibility of providing remote digital orientation services." Some further skills that have been enhanced through the training are, according to representatives of the Berlin Senate, "digital literacy, use of AI-based guidance tools, data analysis for personalized guidance, [and] remote communication techniques."

Richard Parkes from Rinova sees a general transformation between 2020 and 2024, the experiences with GeGS being a part of it: the migration to online working, new methodologies such as case study-

**Kommentiert [EG1]:** I would use the official name: GeGS Training Framework. This comprises the curriculum (revised), the digital case studies suite, and the Moodle Platform. This was released 2 times - one at the time of first pilots, then revised and redone (extra task and deliverable) to get on the results of practitioners' recommendations.

based learning and community of practice were more often used since 2020 and learning in transnational digitized contexts took on a more important role. Also, through Corona, there was a “click moment”, that a more meaningful and active use of tools like Skype, Teams, Zooms was possible, for example, using it more focused and regularly (e.g. monthly CoP sessions). In this process, GeGS was a significant partner to create a more human-centred approach.

Interview partners from the project consortium assure that the training platform will remain in place and be further hosted after the projects close. During the last months of the project, the platform was once again redesigned to become aesthetically more appealing, with learning paths to individual topics and pre-selected case studies. Therefore, one lasting result of the project is that existing good guidance stories are now more easily digestible infotainment stories that could be useful for people who are new to IAG practices.

#### GEGS WEBSITE

Finally, the evaluator team can confirm the completeness of the website at the end of the project. The project website and online library includes the digital case study learning resources, the IAG Competences Framework, the link to the GeGS platform, field trial findings as well as reports from desk research and reports from the Peer Expert Group.

#### 4.1.2. EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH AND FIELD TRIAL FINDINGS

The products and innovations have also been tested through quasi-experimental field trials conducted by SÖSTRA. While these results help to determine the impact or micro-level effects of the GeGS training framework on the knowledge, attitudes and skills of professional IAG practitioners (such as critically assessing new digital tools), some methodological shortcomings of the field trials need to be mentioned. According to a personal interview conducted with Silke Kriwoluzky from SÖSTRA, the field trials in general show more qualitative than quantitatively measurable effects on improving the abilities of IAG practitioners. One reason for this is probably the self-selection of participants. While the field trials with practitioners involved as planned 180 practitioners, a total of about 40 IAG practitioners tested the digital tool in their counselling processes with about 500 clients over a period of 12 months (June 2023 to June 2024). Over the entire testing period, meetings were held regularly on the regional level in order to support implementation and to foster exchange among the practitioners regarding their experiences and challenges.

In SÖSTRAs third report on the results of the trials, the main hypothesis of the project, namely that the digitalisation of IAG is not solely about introducing new technologies “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-centered, holistic and empowering.” (see proposal, p. 72), was tested against the evidence. According to the SÖSTRA report, the GeGS project offered systemic and participatory training opportunities on digital and IAG competencies and did have the potential to design IAG e-services in a client-centred, holistic and empowering manner. Participants of the case study training framework lauded the work formats and the blended learning concept enabling them to participate despite their high workloads and time constraints. Participants also benefitted from direct discussions with peers in the participatory formats (e.g. action learning sets, online discussions and the community of practice).

SÖSTRA also assessed the potential of the Jobiri tool to be client-centred, holistic and empowering. However, the measurable usefulness of the tool for the target group was mixed due to time constraints within the scope of the project. The adjustment of the tool to regional contexts was important but time consuming, because crucial tasks such as implementing web scraping to regional job opportunities resulted to be technically challenging and in some cases hindered by external factors, such as the limitations posed by public servers, as it was discovered in the case of the Federal Ministry of Labour in Germany.

According to the experimental findings, the tool provided good services for the purpose of job searching and matching and was especially helpful for people who had difficulties reaching the counselling office and for digitally savvy young people. Hybrid forms of incorporating the digital tools into the counselling process seem to be the most promising. (This is also emphasised by several of the interviewed project partners.)

In line with the project's main hypothesis, the existing tried and tested counselling tools applied to deliver the e-services (e.g. practices regarding the CEDEFOP competences) have proven their worth in being client-centered, holistic and empowering. The empowerment effect is strongest, when clients accept that the responsibility of the job orientation and search process is being shifted to them through the new tools, whereas other clients exhibiting a stronger service mentality could benefit less.

The report by SÖSTRA also determines the overall effectiveness of e-services in providing a higher quality of IAG and a faster counselling process for both clients and practitioners. Results show that 76% of clients in the field trial had an overall positive view of the tool. The CV and cover letter builder was seen by most clients as being able to deliver faster and better-quality results than without the tools. This is also true for the general duration of the job search and/or career planning process (although it is noted that most clients lack a point of reference for assessing such differences). IAG practitioners who participated in the field trials seem to be more reserved regarding the effectiveness of the tool, reporting lower added value and lower levels of time saving or even additional time expenditure to adopt the new tools in the counselling process.

Evidence is reported regarding the significance of training opportunities for digital and IAG competences. The field trial results show that using digital tools enhanced practitioners counselling and Cedefop and digital competences (as measured by pre-post comparisons), but also points to the greater challenge of supporting practitioners in incorporating digital tools into trial-and-tested counselling processes. Here, the report shows that not all practitioners found it useful to incorporate the new tool into existing processes, and the experimental approach fell short on including "general information as well as practical tools on process analysis and process design both for IAG practitioners and managers". Based on these field trial findings, SÖSTRA suggests reformulating the GeGS hypothesis by adding "target group-specific technology", process-design competences, and well-structured change processes.

Overall, novelty could be found not only in the products, e.g. the new content, learning materials and stories provided by GeGS but also in the way of developing them, especially the highly appreciate way to generate the case studies and the Communities of Practice (CoP), that was introduced by Rinova and MetropolisNet since the first phases of the project. The development of digital learning materials was shared in transnational partners' staff and practitioners mixed teams, who co-developed the concepts for the new case-studies focusing on the digital shift, reviewed the contents of the existing

ones to make them relevant to the current time and worked with technical experts to realise the case studies in a way they could be attractive, encourage blended and self-paced learning and accommodate different learning styles.

This led to a cultural shift of work concerning content creation that results in increased usefulness of learning materials and learning paths (on a digital platform). The innovative process positively influenced self-efficacy of the participants and can further push innovation in IAG because of higher engagement of staff. External evaluators perceive some reluctance, when the IAG staff is provided with “ready-made solutions”, like Jobiri (although it had been adopted to the local needs). That goes along with the hypothesis of the project and partly explains the lower numbers of Jobiri long time users (others are dropouts of clients due to job finding, organisational prerequisites for IAG staff). It shows that “one size” does not fit all in the case of enhanced digital tools. Where it fits, various benefits were reported.

#### *Main findings: Innovation and validity*

A first and vital part of the project was the development of a new digital competence curriculum framework, based on the competencies laid out in the Cedefop Career Guidance Framework and DigiComp framework. Corresponding case studies for IAG practitioners, some of them completely newly developed, were digitally enhanced and transformed into interactive learning tools that can be preserved beyond the project’s duration together with a project website with further materials such as a library, field trial findings and key documents by the project consortium, such as the Thematic Reports and the Memorandum of Understanding of the Peer Expert Group.

Secondly, utility of new ICT (information and communication technology) tools in IAG practices was tested throughout the project. For this purpose, a cooperation was entered between the Italian software developing firm “Jobiri” and regional public authorities from the VET sectors. The AI tool Jobiri offers automated creation and enhancement of job application documents (CV and cover letter builders), helps finding job offers (automated screening of job offers) and provides digital career counselling (e.g. interview training and learning new job search strategies with the help of an e-learning system). Since the tool is tailored to the Italian labour market and was previously only available in Italian, contents were translated to German and Greek and adjusted to regional contexts in the participating regions.

Finally, another feature ensuring the validity of the project results were quasi-experimental field trials conducted by one of the project partners and the present summative external evaluation by abif.

## 4.2. TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The following section focuses on the general effectiveness of the participative method of co-creation and transnational learning/adopting to address the need for innovation on regional and organization level (meso-level) and on IAG-systems in general (macro-level). Transnationality in the GeGS proposal

refers to “the impact of the project on a transnational basis, including dissemination of results and products”. We report findings from the internal quality assurance process and the results of two online surveys by abif distributed via the project group mailing list and final conference participants. The dissemination of project results is more narrowly covered in the last section with reference to statements made by interview partners from the policy level.

#### 4.2.1. INTERNAL EVALUATION OF PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AND TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS

##### 4.2.1.1. QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN (QPA) AND INTERNAL REPORTS

To assess the usefulness and relevance of the GeGS project partnership for its members, the external evaluation team was able to draw on results from previous internal evaluations conducted by Rinova (WP6). Between March 2021 and July 2023, five internal reports have been produced focusing on the needs of project partners and the proceedings of the transnational meetings as part of an “on-going, peer-led and formative” internal evaluation. Central to it was a digital questionnaire assessment exercise, using the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ‘traffic light’ system as well as Likert type rankings and short open-ended survey questions justifying the rankings or as a space to address other pressing issues. The five internal reports indicate high approval and satisfaction rates with the organisation of the partnership. Understanding of aims and objectives of the project and confidence in the skills and expertise of partners were – with minor exceptions – consistently high throughout the project. Problems were related to the high overall complexity of the multi-faceted project and to the practical challenges regarding the “implementation” work packages, the Jobiri platform adaptation (WP2), research design and implementation (WP3) and field trials (WP4). For example, recruiting and retraining participants for both phases of the field trial was cited as a recurring problem. The corona crisis, accompanying the project over a substantial period, proved to be both hindering and enabling for the partnership. On the one hand, project partners emphasized the value of informal face-to-face-meetings, on the other, Covid-19 was appreciated as “push factor” for virtual collaboration.

##### 4.2.1.2. RISK ANALYSIS

Risks that emerged during the project were proactively identified and mitigated (WP 6). Risk analysis through identification, evaluation, prioritization, and management of risks was done by Dimitra (Greece). The first round of risk identification took place at the beginning of the project by the consortium. Subsequently, risks were evaluated estimating the risks’ probabilities and potential impact (low, medium, or high), leading to a prioritization across four levels: ‘Critical Risk’, ‘Moderate Risk’, ‘Marginal Risk’ and ‘Eliminated Risk’. The risk management was carried out by monitoring risks and responding to them. The initial risk monitoring plan foresaw 6 risk analysis reports throughout the project (for details, see first Risk Analysis from June 2021). While most of the foreseen risks were considered marginal at the time of the first risk analysis in June 2021, some moderate unforeseen risks were associated with the adaptation and implementation of Jobiri (WP2) due to the complexity of algorithms in 3 languages, an insufficient number of team members able to classify occupations to train the system, as well as incorrect classification of occupations or skills extraction due to language complexity or poorly written job offers. The delayed feedback collection and ranking to co-develop and better customize the platform was considered ‘critical’ already at the beginning. A further moderate risk was the shift between WP1 (curriculum development) and WP4 (field trials). Proposed risk



measures included work plans adjustment, a robust and expert experimental approach, and frequent feedback loops, as well as workshops planned and intensified communication.

As can be seen from the updated Risk Management Register in 2023, the risk situation slightly changed from project period 1 and 2 (July 2021 to July 2022) to period 3 and 4 (July 2022 to July 2023). From July 2022 onward, foreseen moderate risks included the necessary time and detailed approach to implement the platform in each country (WP2), technical problems related to the update of the Moodle platform (WP1), the maintenance of the engagement of practitioners and the acquisition of beneficiaries/clients to test Jobiri (WP4). New moderate risks had emerged concerning the dissemination of results, e.g. delays and shortage of publications because of lack of direct access to ministries' PR tools and lack of time to present results in public, and the exploitation of outcomes, because of a noted tendency within a ministry to hesitate in committing to concrete agreements. Additionally, the updated register classified not only the delayed feedback collection and ranking, but also incorrect classification of occupations and skills extraction due to language complexity and poorly written job offers as 'critical risk' for the implementation and adaptation of Jobiri (WP2). In the later period between July 2022 and July 2023 further moderate and critical risks were identified. The most severe was the bankruptcy and subsequent loss of a partner from the consortium, resulting in financial losses hindering the project's results. Additionally, the implementation of Jobiri (WP2) was confronted with new risks, e.g. late feedback from practitioners on features required and the reliability of the job search (because of closed source databanks). The two components of the field trials (WP4) proved to be lengthy procedures, and lack of time hindered proper exploitation (WP8). The reduced engagement of beneficiaries not involved in the piloting of Jobiri (Ireland, UK, France) was noted as another moderate risk for dissemination of results (WP7).

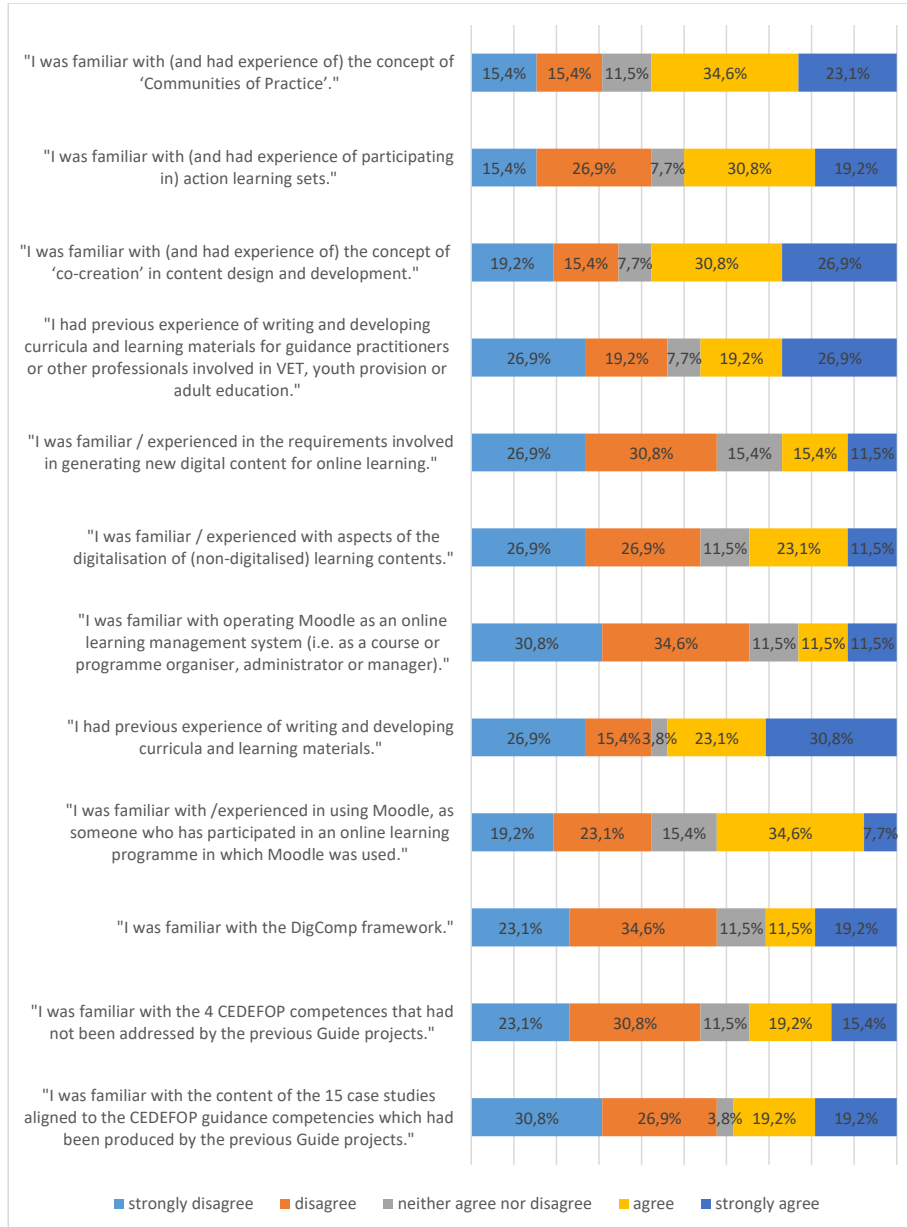
The risk analysis appears to have met the requirements of being able to react adequately and promptly to risks. It also shows that some of the risks identified during the evaluation were also recognised by the project consortium and were proactively managed as part of the policy experiment. The risk analysis and consequent management and mitigation measures were regularly updated by project partners, reviewed and thematised collectively, so that this could become a lively tool to observe the project progress and manage the challenges progressively emerging, especially in the preparation and carrying out of field trials.

#### 4.2.2. PROGRESS AND LEARNING CURVE IN PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

According to the second internal report by Rinova, that acts as a benchmark report, 15% of all participants of the transnational meetings had no prior experience with EU-financed transnational projects. Others were, at the beginning, not familiar with core aspects of the project. For example, 46% were unfamiliar with the 'Good Guidance Stories' concept. Familiarity with this and other core concepts such as "communities of practice", "action learning sets" or "co-creation" has risen substantially already throughout the first 10 months after the first transnational meeting, as well as the confidence in the use of Moodle and the digitalisation of learning contexts and the familiarity with the Digcomp Framework and the 19 CEDEFOP competences. Therefore, a learning curve and 'journey' can be observed among stakeholders with reference to the ambitious co-creation requirements from partners and methods deployed in the project, and the partners representative's 'relationship' with them, during the project's critical/foundational design year, prior to the enactment of field trials (for details, refer to Q18 and Q20 in the second internal report from March 2022).

Figure 2 reports numbers on the familiarity of project partners with key aspects or concepts of the GeGS projects according to Rinovas 2<sup>nd</sup> internal report (2021/22). As can be seen from the data, familiarity with concepts was relatively evenly distributed between partners who had not encountered aspects before the project and those who already had more experience. Respondents tended to be more familiar with concepts and actions that were not tied to the context of digitalisation and AI, e.g. “communities of practice”, “action learning sets”, “co-creation” as well as writing and developing curricula and learning materials. Less familiarity and experience were reported on generating new digital content for online learning and on the digitalisation of (non-digitalised) learning contents. Additionally, respondents had little experience with operating Moodle as an online learning management system. The familiarity with the Digcomp framework and the Cedefop competences and corresponding guidance stories was higher. Still, only approximately one third of the participants reported familiarity with these aspects.

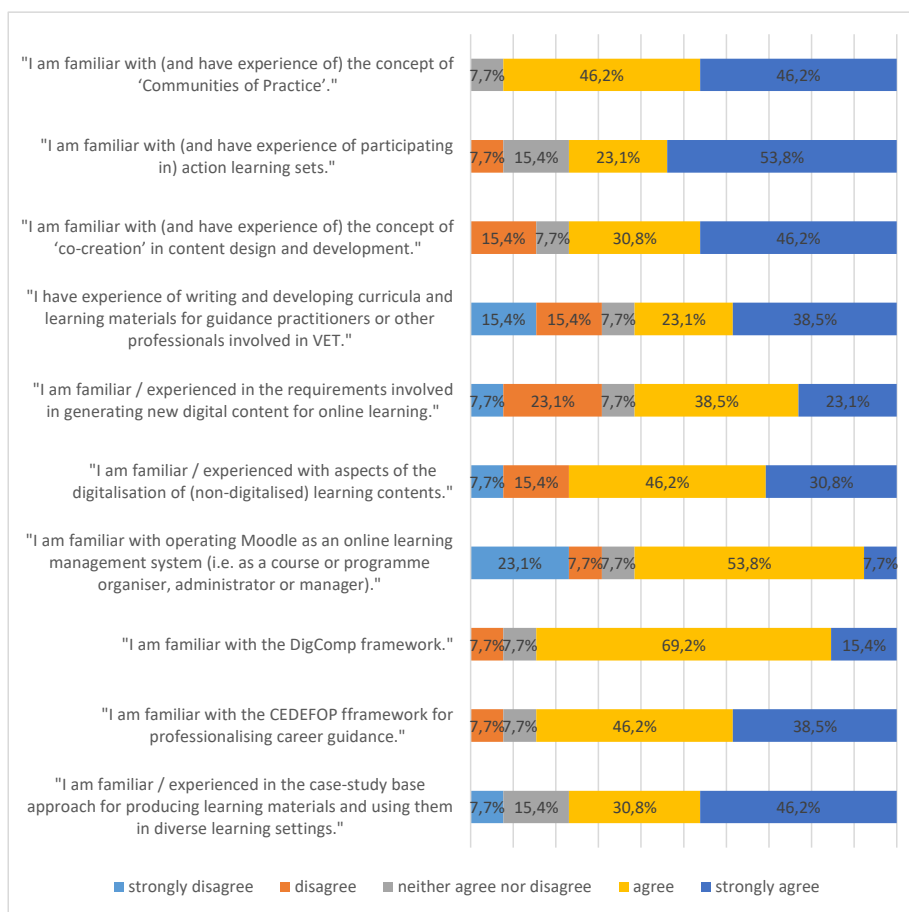
Figure 2: Familiarity and experience with key concepts of GeGS among project partners in 2021/22 (n=26)



As Rinova did not follow up on these results further at the end of the project, abif conducted a final online survey from June to July 2024 to monitor progress 2 years after the initial baseline was

determined and compare the results. In this survey, abif asked project partners to report on their familiarity with and experience of key concepts in the GeGS project. The questions were largely the same as in the original survey, but slightly shortened. Questions 8 and 9 of the survey conducted by Rinova in 2021/22 (see Figure 2) were no longer asked because they were aimed at previous experience, which is no longer considered relevant at the time of the final survey. As can be seen from Figure 3, respondents who participated in the survey reported stronger familiarity not only with the core concepts of participatory methods of collaboration, but also on the concepts and actions specifically focused on the digitalization of IAG services.

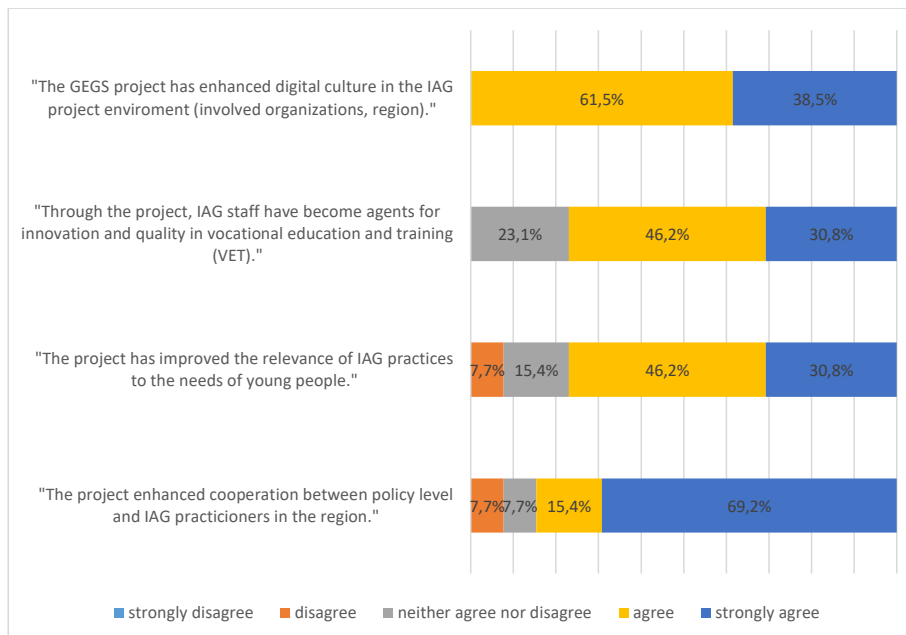
Figure 3: Familiarity and experience with key concepts of GeGS among project partners in 2024 (n=13)



In addition, abif asked project partners to assess whether the GeGS project can achieve the desired long-term goals of innovating IAG services (see Figure 4). The general view among project partners is that the project helped to enhance digital culture in the IAG project environment (involved organizations, region). Furthermore, 77% of project partners agreed that IAG staff have become agents

for innovation and quality in vocational education and training (VET) through the project and almost 85% think that the project enhanced cooperation between the policy level and IAG practitioners in the region. With 69,2% this question also received the highest level of strong agreement, a finding that is also consistent with the personal interviews. An additional focus of the project was the extent to which young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) could benefit from the use of AI tools as part of IAG practices. A large proportion (77%) of the project partners surveyed stated that the project indeed increased the relevance of IAG practices for young people.

Figure 4: Perceived overall impact and legacy of the GeGS project (n=13)



This positive view on the lasting impact of the project can be further explicated by the open question about exploitation actions and the expected lasting impacts or benefits of the project on policy and practice in the VET and IAG sector. As for the cultural shift through GeGS, the "need to implement digital tools for online orientation to support face-to-face orientation" is emphasised by one respondent. Another respondent notices the "better possibility of carrying out orientation actions remotely," and the possibility of peer consultative support through the community of practice. The "availability of a platform on which to benefit from educational and training support" is also mentioned. The moodle platform is praised for its high quality at the end of the project: "The moodle online training has been improved during the project duration and has now a qualitative high standard." An overall benefit of the project is seen in the "opportunity to provide better services thanks to technology, [a] stronger understanding of the evolution of IAG services [and a] more effective and efficient way of working."

One respondent shares his/her experience on "the sessions of the last training cohort where I saw people enjoying the case study-based learning materials. They also expressed how they enjoyed sharing experiences in a group setting online, and how joining the sessions gave them an opportunity

to review, see and practice their digital skills. The traumatic experiences from the forced and rushed e-guidance during the pandemic surfaced a few times. Overall, my impression was that practitioners benefited from having a space to share experiences, review their own, and take on new ideas and practices, which in the long run I believe will have given them more confidence as well as new skills that will have a lasting impact on their work as well as personal wellbeing at work.” Further responses referred specifically to effect on the policy level and are reported in section 4.3.2

For some partner organisations, the project was also important for the further development of their own organisation. Participation in GeGS partially helped one partner organisation to become formally accredited for the quality and compliance of its guidance services and being registered as a VET institution by national authorities. Additionally, the project helped the organisation to further participate in the European context of (lifelong) learning initiatives.

#### 4.2.3. IMPACTS OF FINAL CONFERENCE

To obtain further final assessments from GeGS participants, participants of the final conference were invited to take part in an online survey, focusing on the quality of the conference. There were 61 people present on site, online 50 logins from different people were counted. Following the invitation during the conference and a reminder after the conference, 38 people were persuaded to take part, 15 of whom left large parts of the questionnaire unanswered. Therefore, n=23 respondents were included in the analysis. 17 of those were actively involved in GeGS, for example in project organisation, research, evaluation or as consultants or practitioners. Accordingly, most of them learnt about GeGS when they applied for the project or when they joined the team. Few respondents heard about GeGS for the first time during the conference.

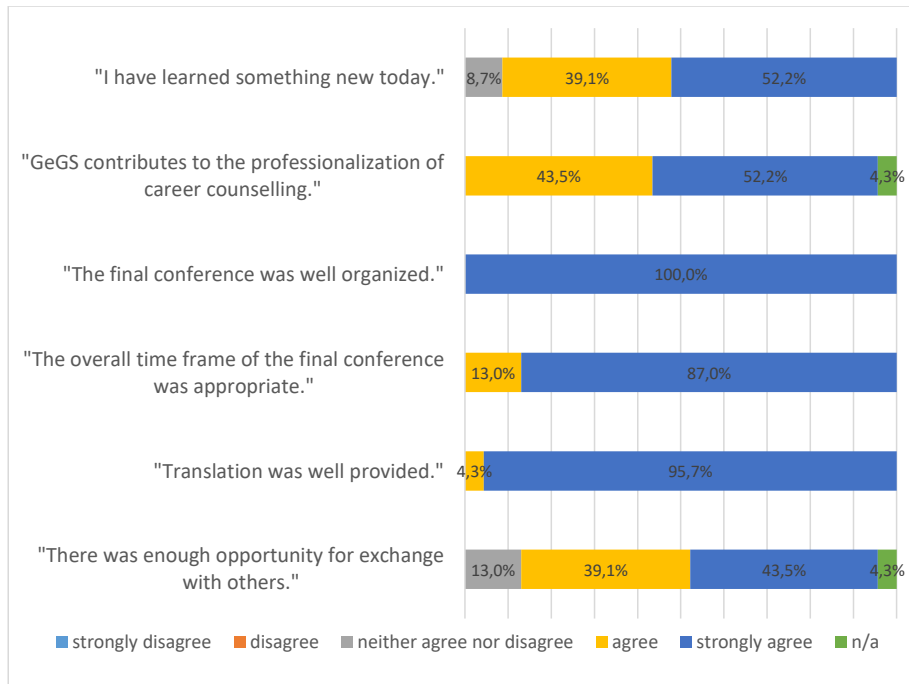
8 of the respondents stated that they (among other things) took part in the conference in the role of a guidance practitioner, 8 described that they are (among other things) in a role where their position operates at policy or program level in VET/guidance service, 4 are (also) managers of guidance services or VET provision.<sup>1</sup> 5 interviewees cannot identify with any of these titles.

As can be seen in Figure 5, all of the respondents thought that the conference was well organised, that the timeframe of the conference was appropriate, and that translation was well provided (“agree” or “strongly agree”). Accordingly, over 91% of respondents (21 people) said that they would describe the conference overall as very successful, while one person was undecided, and another said that they were very dissatisfied.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> „Today I am here in the role of a ...“ (multiple answers possible), n=23.

<sup>2</sup> „How would you rate the quality of the conference programme?“ (5-level scale), n=23.

Figure 5: "How much do you agree with the following statements?" (n=23)



Those who responded also agree that GeGS contributes to the professionalisation of career counselling, with more than half of the respondents strongly agreeing. With a few exceptions, the respondents stated that they learnt something new at the conference and that they were able to network or make new contacts.

This is also reflected in the answers to the open question about what they took away from the event: When asked what the participants could take away from the conference for their professional activities and/or their organisation, 15 people emphasised the valuable ideas, insights and inputs, while 6 praised (among other things) the contacts and exchanges. 6 of the respondents took the opportunity to compliment the conference, while 4 found that the conference provided them with valuable feedback for the final assessment of the project.

Those who report new insights specify that they have become more aware of the "relevance of knowledge about digital tools and how to use them" and the "importance of guidance, lifelong learning and networks" and that they have gained insights into IAG services and VET systems in other countries, especially knowledge about policies related to young people in Germany. One respondent added that he or she not only found the differences between the European countries and regions revealing, but also (and above all) the realisation of how comparable the situations and problems are. The participants were also confronted with forms of learning such as the community of practice and with the opportunities and limitations of digital tools in labour market-related counselling - emphasising that these opportunities and limitations are target group-specific and depend, for example, on group-specific acceptance. One person (who was involved in coordinating the project) summarises: "There

are so many outputs and results within the GeGS legacy that were highlighted in the final conference. It was great to realise all the learning of our organisation in terms of digitalisation, guidance approach and interagency collaboration with regional bodies and at European level”.

The results of the two online surveys suggest that the project results have the potential to drive forward a cultural shift in the IAG and VET sector, enhance cooperation, despite different VET governance systems and structures and help IAG staff to become agents of innovation and quality in VET.

#### 4.2.4. DISSEMINATION

Dissemination refers to “the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy to inform key stakeholders on the quality, relevance and effectiveness of activities and results” (GeGS proposal). As can be seen from the written documentation and specifically the partner reports on this issue, results and findings of the GeGS project have been effectively disseminated and communicated by project partners to stakeholders on the local, regional, national and European level. Various means of communication have been applied, including the project website, social media content, newsletters, promotional materials and a promotional video. Key multipliers according to the internal project documentation were the social media channels of the GeGS partner organisations. Additionally, a midterm conference in October 2022 in Cagliari (Sardinia) and a final conference in May 2024 in Berlin (Germany) were held to further disseminate project outcomes.

Representatives of the Berlin Senate argue that “results and findings have been disseminated through a comprehensive communication strategy involving reports, websites, social media, newsletters, and conferences” and that “the means of communication reached target groups including policymakers, practitioners, and educational institutions. Conferences and networking activities particularly facilitated direct interaction and knowledge exchange. Existing barriers to the use of the materials and tools developed by the project are seen to be caused by “limited digital literacy, resistance to change from traditional methods, and technical infrastructure challenges in certain regions.” Vassilis Pitsilkas from the Region of Thessaly also thinks that the means of dissemination finally reached the target groups “on a big scale” but points out that people with academic skills found it easier to familiarize with the new materials. According to Gain Mario Cossu from the Autonomous Region of Sardinia, the dissemination and communication of project results was not easy, because the different administrative bodies of the region share only one general social media profile. His colleague Corrado Ballocco states that “it has not always been possible to give greater and adequate dissemination to the results of the project also because it refers to a fairly niche target and our administration’s social networks have often focused on other more newsworthy aspects.” The conference, however, “achieved good results and a notable number of recipients (although mostly professionals) and “the flyers were distributed on multiple occasions at job fairs and industry events.”

To sum up, external evaluators observe two ways of dissemination: the traditional one “talking about the project”, flyers, social media and so on and the more “invisible” one, where CoPs and invitations led to people coming together (virtually or in person) and talking about issues and subjects that are relevant for their working environments. As reported in the AAR workshop, dissemination participants and stakeholders became ambassadors of the project subject and lessons learned in their work environment with different impacts. So, the success of this “hidden” dissemination could be addressed to the fact, that this was an integral part of the project plan.



#### *Main findings: Transnational project partnership and dissemination of results*

The project followed a participative method of co-creation and transnational learning, enabling the project consortium to develop and timely adjust its procedures. The quality of the transnational project partnership was ensured by an internal quality assurance plan, including internal reports, and risk analyses throughout the project. Surveys among the project partners and participants of project events were conducted as part of the project. Additionally, the external evaluator abif conducted two summative online surveys and a After Action Review during the final project conference, in which the usefulness of the project partnership was assessed and verified. A steep learning curve among project partners was observed, regarding key concepts of the participative GeGS environment, such as “communities of practice”, “action learning sets” and “co-creation” as well as higher familiarity with digital tools and competences and digitised learning environments. Another aspect of the project’s transnationality was the dissemination of results to key stakeholders in the respective regions and nations up to the European level using a variety of channels such as the GeGS website, social media content, newsletters, promotional materials and videos. The organisation of two conferences (midterm and final) for the wider public were a vital part of the dissemination strategy.

### 4.3. EXPLOITATION AND LEGACY

Exploitation and legacy according to the GeGS proposal refers to the longer-term impacts and the effectiveness of GEGS in going forward. This includes “consideration of the necessary and on-going legacy actions required to embed ongoing legacy and evolution of the reforms within the ambit of the key public authorities and, where relevant, regional/national/European decision makers and stakeholders.” (GeGS proposal) The Exploitation Strategy included the establishment of a Peer Expert Group, as well as other activities like the participation of project partners in fora and external events to present the project and the organisation of a final conference for a wider audience.

#### 4.3.1. PEER EXPERT GROUP

At the core of the project’s exploitation strategy was the Peer Expert Group, a separate body alongside the Steering Committee responsible for gathering outcomes and results “to foster reflection and progress policy action, with an eye on sustainability, transferability and scalability of the GEGS experiment”. The Peer Expert Group should also coordinate the peer-learning process and review the project components as well as providing internal consultation to the partners. The Peer Expert Group was specifically put in place for policy implementation and peer-learning processes between the public authorities (see Terms of Reference of the Peer Expert Group).

The Peer Expert Group had the task of generating three main outputs:

- 3 Thematic reports of the Peer Experts’ Groups

- 6 Policy Practice Workshops, one per partner country, bringing together policy makers, IAG practitioners and young people
- Memorandum of Understanding of the three public authorities (ministry partners)

Besides the generating concise documents, the role of the Peer Expert Group was also appreciated in other ways. For example, the community of practice was increasingly promoted after the first 1½ years. Elena Grilli, project lead at MetropolisNet, gives the example of Berlin, where it was hard at the beginning to bring the Senate into the transnational community of practice, whereas in the later part of the project, the Senate took on a very active role in fostering transnational cooperation. At the end of the project, representatives from the Senate in a written interview with abif argue that the Peer Expert Group “provided essential feedback and validation, while the Memorandum of Understanding and Policy Practice Workshops facilitated commitment and practical implementation at various levels.”

#### 4.3.2. EFFECTS ON POLICY LEVEL AND LEGACY

In general, GeGS raised awareness of the relevance of digitalisation aspects in IAG. Representatives of public authorities responsible for planning and managing IAG services, gained a deeper understanding of what digitalisation means for the service provision and the workflow (including micro-steps). They report a better understanding of the needs of practitioners, which has led to them being able to manage the services more effectively (becoming “better managers”). The GeGS project has fostered ongoing involvement of public authorities, connecting policy-level and ground-level work. This was achieved through the establishment of a platform for interaction between them and a common theme/problem, that must be solved, namely the need for adaptation to digitalisation). The COP has strengthened the IAG network. In Berlin at the Senate, the results are already being used for programme planning, i.e. for the service description of IAG services according to statements in AAR workshop.

Reflecting the partnership’s work, those who missed to involve higher policy levels in the project (as it was not required for all partners) seem to regret it and plan this for future projects. In general, the requirement of public authorities to be involved was highly appreciated at the end of the project. In general, it seems that public authorities got a deeper understanding not only of the subject-specific topics, but also of the way “new EU projects” work and the benefits of transnational partnerships.

In the participating regions Berlin, Sardinia, and Thessaly, the effects of the project on policies are mixed, as can be seen from interviews with partners at the policy level. In Thessaly, Vassilis Pitsilkas argues that they adapted the project’s components to the regional context. He also agrees that the methods, products, and AI tools for VET stakeholders were “very relevant and up to date according to their needs”. On the other hand, he argues that “there was not any systemic change at the EU, national, regional or local level due to the project.” He nevertheless reports that the newly elected governor of Thessaly is familiar with EU projects and is believed to support the kind of policies of the project. At the time of writing, however, his new VET and IAG agenda has not yet been implemented.

In Berlin, representatives of the Senate emphasise that the “results and findings have strengthened the already followed strategy of the inclusion of digital guidance standards in education frameworks, increased funding for digital infrastructure, and initiatives promoting continuous professional development.” It is argued that the project indeed “has initiated a cultural shift by embedding digital

competency and innovation as core components of VET and IAG practices. Participants have opened up to an increased adoption of digital tools and methods.”

In Sardinia, the public authorities were heavily involved in the project, the field testing and roll-out of the project and tools. Following changes after the 2024 regional election, support for the project was reduced, but the learning outcomes continue to have an impact as the working culture has changed. In Sardinia, GeGS was included in the public programme. This doesn't mean, that all specific (Jobiri-)tools will be included in the public labour market administration, but the support for the LLL and support for general digitalization of IAG and VET and the support for participatorily modernizing IAG. According to Gian Marco Cossu from the Autonomous Region of Sardinia, GeGS was innovative as a best practice, introducing digital tools to Sardinia's active labour market policies for the first time. In this respect, the project already has a lasting impact on regional labour market policies. Digitalization of services now plays a more important role as an integral part of the current regional GOL (Garanzia di Occupabilità dei Lavoratori<sup>3</sup>) programme. Since there are many rural areas in Sardinia, he sees digital tools as a solution to provide IAG services at a distance, especially in areas, where lack of public transport is an obstacle. Cossu also points out that due to the digital divide in rural areas (measured by SPID<sup>4</sup> users in a region), recipients of services must first also be given digital skills to benefit from the new digital tools. The cultural shift initiated by the project is regarded by Cossu in setting an important example and showing the power of AI tools as part of daily IAG practices. It showed how the routine parts of service provision, for example Jobiri's CV and cover letter builder, can be simplified with AI, leaving more space for empathy and taking care of the diverse social problems of clients.

As mentioned by various interview partners, a lasting impact of the project is the new transnational collaboration around the design of labour market programmes. This is also included within the Memorandum of Understanding, according to which the project outcomes should be used “to inform the review and design of plannings with regards to the European Social Fund and complementary VET and labour market programmes in which the parties are involved at regional level.” The community of practice is unanimously considered as helpful for the provision of better IAG and VET practices. Gian Marco Cossu from the Autonomous Region of Sardinia emphasises the novelty value and innovativeness of the community of practice, that opened the possibility to exchange opinions on a transnational level, e.g. by sharing similar case studies. Before the Community of Practice was established, exchange happened only in individual manner. For Cossu, the CoP established new possibilities and moments of exchange and occasions to get feedback and improve policies. For the future, Cossu emphasises that it would be good to have structure/organisation for further exchange, which would require new economic and human resources.

The assumed impact of the project on the policy level is also visible from answers to the open-ended questions of the final survey among project partners (see 4.2.2). On the policy level, respondents see that the policy level is taking the first steps in the directions envisaged by GeGS. One respondent says that “the policy level in the region has already signalled an interest in further developing digitalisation strategies for IAG services to the relevant project partners, in order not to lose the GeGS momentum.” Others argue that the “public authorities gained a better understanding of the contexts in which IAG is taking place, which hopefully will influence / improve their decision making and policies” and that “the project has led to an increase in awareness, especially at the administrative level (...), has

<sup>3</sup> Guaranteed Employability of Workers. See <https://www.sardegnalavoro.it/programma-gol/>

<sup>4</sup> Sistema Pubblico di Identità Digitale is the Public Digital Identity System in Italy.

highlighted the importance of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (...) [and] some of the findings from the project will be practiced in the future.” The Thematic Reports, the Peer Expert Group and the Memorandum of Understanding are seen as important steps for the implementation of changes at the policy level: “The Thematic reports and the Peer Expert Group are sustainable and will stay there after the end of the project. They represent a critical effort of the partners and experts to summarize from a semi-external point of view the concepts and discoveries done during the journey.” “The participating regions of the GeGS project have stated in the Memorandum of Understanding that they will continue to foster digitalisation in guidance services in the future. Guidance and digitalisation of guidance services are core elements of active labour market and VET policies and were highly supported by the GeGS project.” Another lasting impact is the perceived necessity to update the Cedefop digital competencies framework from 2009 and adapt the competencies to the changes in the world of jobs, which is also emphasised in the Memorandum of Understanding.

In conclusion, the main legacy on the policy level is the cultural shift in the work (cooperation of different levels), the cautious roll-out of digital requirements on the service level, a better understanding for needs of lifelong learning for practitioners and the implementation of blended guidance.

#### 4.3.3. ADDITIONAL VALUE OF GEGS

The public-private partnership with Jobiri offered additional value for both sides. A respectful and fruitful cooperation was mentioned in interviews with participants (“It was a great deal to work with passionate professionals”). Through the intensive cooperation on the development, integration, testing, and adopting of Jobiri to the use cases of the partners they learned from each other, e.g. the public sector learned the possibilities and limits of the technology. On the other hand, the Jobiri technician took the opportunity to develop solutions according to the needs of public sector (data protection etc). The statement “GeGS was a change maker, we were change makers” from one of the interview partners describes the cultural shift that was made. Skills and knowledge were gained at partner institutions about possibilities and chances but also on limitations of technology. Jobiri, according to their business values, cooperates with public institutions to support individuals in their job search and enhance matching on the labour market (no selling of data). Individuals gain career management skills using platform tools (interview training, professional CV and cover letters builder), professional counsellors can help them (if needed) and on the long run persons are empowered to apply for jobs on their own. They have the data “in their own hands” (Jobiri interview) and the service is accessible for everyone (for no or low costs, depending on implementation). For career counsellors, who use Jobiri with their clients, it is an alternative way of working, as they can follow up the developments of their clients according to their personal action plan on the platform. At the beginning, the counsellors need a little more time to familiarize themselves with the way of work, but then they save time and can focus on other personal issues of the clients.

##### 4.3.3.1. REMAINING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

All partners wanted to keep the learning platform, that was finally transformed in a modern course system (<https://www.goodeguidance.cloud/>). One policy partner argued that “continuous use and updates of these tools are necessary to keep pace with technological advancements and evolving user needs” and that this “could be ensured by securing ongoing funding” as well as “ensuring access to the GeGS platform and regularly updating its content.” But during the AAR workshop, it became clear that

there were no further plans how to manage to keep the learning platform. A sub-working group was therefore spontaneously formed and came up with the following results, that were agreed by all partners: They plan to keep the system running at least for 1.5 years and develop a commercial agreement between partners for further use. Each partner will be responsible for their own language updates. Both guest access and full enrolment will be provided. A link from project website to the cloud will be integrated. The partners can use the platform for further training offers as blended learning tool.

According to Elena Grilli, project lead at MetropolisNet, the second release of the learning platform (former Moodle platform) included even more improvements, e.g. less material and more direct thematic pathways (evaluators came to the same conclusions and recommendations when testing the platforms). New thematic pathways will be developed. The next step would be to turn the learning platform into a recognized learning path, for example for developing a ECTS credential system in cooperation with universities or micro-credentials in cooperation with the project partner Ciofs-fp.

Corrado Ballocco (Sardinia) discloses his plans for Sardinia as follows: “The project has given an important boost to awareness of the importance of orientation and training in digital mode and of mixed assistance between in-person consultancy and remote support. As regards policies, a vertical mainstreaming process will be necessary capable of systematizing the results of the project in relation to the need to create forms of transnational cooperation between operators coming from different contexts who know how to work synergistically through the community of practice. (...) I am thinking of the possibility of creating a stable and active community of practice, the possibility of using the Moodle and Jobiri platform and also the possibility of using digital methods for guidance consultancy.”

Jobiri, the matching and e-guidance platform has been permanently adopted due to field test results and technical developments in. For partners, Jobiri is available in their languages and the technology “Jobiri” is incorporated by the field-testing-partners. Ongoing cooperation is planned for instance with Greek Partner Dimitra. Jobiri is a flexible system, that can be used by IAG institutions and projects and be adapted to specific needs and target groups, and therefore is attractive for IAG additional to administrative platforms of Public Employment Services. It provides Job Search, CV builder, CV analyser, letter builder, training for interviews, video lessons and personal (human) guidance, with local career guides (within a specific program like GeGS) or career guides of Jobiri itself. Jobiri is growing constantly and has about 180.000 users (job searcher) and about 1000 career guidance practitioners using Jobiri (June 2024).

Jobiri requests for funds for guidance in schools. In Greece, there is a special interest from the centre for career guidance to use Jobiri in schools. Jobiri integration offers new opportunities and provides values for users.

According to Elena Grilli, project lead at MetropolisNet, and Claudio Sponchioni, CEO of Jobiri, the adaptation process was long and complicated but had a lasting impact. Although Jobiri business model is a software-as-a-service approach, project partners can still use it after the project end. Vice versa, Jobiri benefits from the project as a test area for the development of its products.

#### *Main findings: Exploitation and legacy*

Carried out between 2021 and 2024, the GeGS project was part and has contributed to a wider cultural shift towards the more frequent and effective use of digital tools in AIG

practices and (more generally) in the VET sector. In the project, various measures were taken to ensure the longer-term impact and exploitation of the project results. The exploitation strategy's centrepiece was the "Peer Expert Group" consisting of key public authorities and decision makers in the VET sector, who were responsible for the sustainability, transferability, and scalability of the policy experiment. Its members drafted 3 Thematic Reports, organised 6 Policy Practice Workshops and were also responsible for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the involved policy partners. The project helped representatives of public authorities to gain a better understanding of digitalisation and how to integrate digital tools into their service provision and workflows. It also helped representative to better manage IAG services and to connect initiatives at the policy level to the various ground-level practices. The participatory character of the project is evident in the high level of confidence among project partners that the established community of practice (COP) will be one of the lasting effects of the project. Therefore, the legacy of the project consists not only in concrete products such as the learning platform and website but also in grown relationships and learning environments that have been established throughout the project, with the community of practice as a centrepiece praised by all participating partners.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The external evaluators found an ambitious project, divided into several paths, that was able to fulfil many of the requirements of the time, which were reflected in the project goals. This was possible – despite the acceleration of developments in AI – because of anticipatory planning, the living "community of practice", the project structure with formative evaluation supporting management and the development of the partnership. Although some operative figures in field trials (testing of digital tools with NEETs) could not be reached for several reasons, the outcomes are valid, lessons are learned and the benefits on micro-level (IAG organisations) and regional policy level are clearly visible.

The following recommendations could be derived to strengthen the projects legacy after its close:

- Implement the planned contract for the maintenance and use of the new GeGS Training Framework and the Moodle platform and develop as agreed of new thematic learning paths which has already begun with 3 new learning paths besides the "traditional" organisation by CEDEFOP competences clusters
- Disseminate results within the CEDEFOP network
- Highlight the learning platform prominently on project and partner websites after the end of the project; and to maintain update and operational the digital resources developed, also in connection with the Communities of Practice which are alive and committed to stay alive via the Memorandum of Understanding
- Make the platform accessible to other organisations/countries and encourage its use, e.g. via new project partnerships
- Provide communities of practice with financial and time resources (develop COPs based on current common issues or have a common topic on which they are supposed to work on. In the context of the GeGS project, common topics have been identified transnationally).

- Initiating projects to integrate the Good e-Guidance Stories into training for IAG-staff
- Increase the relevance for LLL for IAG staff through the development of micro-credentials for GeGS learning contents
- Use the learning platform to feed in new case studies arising from CoPs and make them available to others (cf. proposal by Corrado Ballocco in the previous chapter).
- Follow up the idea of adapting the Cedefop digital competencies framework from 2009 to the changes in the world of work would be another step to utilize GeGS results. Even if this is beyond the means of the partners involved, it could be a suggestion for CEDEFOP network. Private-public partnerships like the current one between regional public authorities and Jobiri can possibly be useful because both sides seemed to have profited from the cooperation (high agreement according to the final survey)

## ANNEX

## INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

**Dissemination, Exploitation, and Sustainability/Legacy****1. Influence on Policy and Practice:**

- How is the project influencing ongoing policy and practice in the VET and IAG sectors beyond the project's duration?
- What aspects of the project do you see having a lasting impact?

**2. Dissemination and Communication:**

- How effectively are the results and findings of the project being disseminated and utilized by stakeholders?
- To what extent did the chosen means of communication (website, social media, newsletters, brochures/leaflets, press releases, conferences, networking activities) reach the target groups?
- What barriers exist to the use of the materials and tools developed by the project?

**3. Exploitation:**

- Through which kind of policy actions and reforms have the positive results been up-scaled, mainstreamed and multiplied?
- To what extent have the Peer Expert's Group, the Memorandum of Understanding and Policy Practice Workshops contributed to the exploitation of the GeGS project?
- Did all the workshops take place? Did the relevant people take part?

**4. Sustainability, Legacy, Ongoing Adoption:**

- To what extent has the project initiated a cultural shift in VET and IAG practices?
- Is there a need for ongoing adoption of the tools developed by the project?
- How could continuous support and adoption be provided? E.g. will access to the GeGS platform be guaranteed after the project and will the content be kept up to date?

**Other aspects if not evident from the written documentation****Effectiveness****1. Improvement of Skills:**



- How effectively does the training framework improve the skills of IAG practitioners in your experience?
- Can you provide examples of specific skills that have been enhanced through the training?

## 2. Enhancement through AI-based Tools:

- To what extent has the introduction of AI-based e-guidance tools enhanced the different guidance functions in VET?
- Can you share any particular success stories or challenges encountered with these tools?

## Relevance

### 1. Adaptation to Regional Contexts:

- Are the project's components suitably adapted to the varying contexts of different European regions?
- How well do these components address the unique needs of your region?

### 2. Relevance of Methods and Tools:

- How relevant are the methods, products, and AI tools for VET stakeholders according to their current needs?
- In your opinion, how many IAG practitioners in your country/community are currently using advanced e-guidance tools?

## Impact

### 1. Measurable Impact:

- What is the measurable impact of the project on the professional practices of IAG practitioners?
- To what extent has the engagement of IAG practitioners/organizations changed over the project period?

### 2. Systemic Changes:

- What systemic changes has the project initiated at the EU, national, regional, and local levels?
- Can you cite specific policies or practices that have been influenced by the project?

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THE FINAL CONFERENCE

Dear participants, thank you very much for participating in the conference  
"Navigating Information, Advice and Guidance in the Era of Digital  
Transformation".

We are curious about feedback. Please answer the following questions!

Liebe Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer, vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an der  
Konferenz „Navigating Information, Advice and Guidance in the Era of Digital  
Transformation“.

Wir sind neugierig auf Ihr Feedback. Bitte beantworten Sie die folgenden Fragen!

**Section A: Navigating Information, Advice and Guidance in the Era of Digital Transformation**

A1. Would you like to complete the questionnaire in English or German?  
(Möchten Sie den Fragebogen auf Englisch oder Deutsch ausfüllen?)

English (Englisch)

German (Deutsch)

**Section B: Navigating Information, Advice and Guidance in the Era of Digital Transformation**

B1. When did you first learn about GeGS?

B2. Were you actively involved in GeGS? And if so, in which role?

No

Yes. Please use the comment box to indicate in which role you were actively involved!

**B3. What can you take away from today's event for your professional activity or your organization (insights, contacts, ideas...)?**

**B4. How much do you agree with the following statements?**

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
I have learned something new today.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GeGS contributes to the professionalization of career counselling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The final conference was well organized.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The overall time frame of the final conference was appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Translation was well provided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There was enough opportunity for exchange with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**B5. Please indicate: Today I am here in the role of a:**

Guidance practitioner

Manager of guidance services or VET provision

I am in a role where my position operates at policy or program level in VET/guidance service

None of the above

**B6. How did you attend the final conference?**

Online

Offline

**B7. Would you say that the online facilities were well set up?**

strongly disagree

disagree

neither agree nor disagree

agree

strongly agree

**B8. Would you say that there were some technical issues? If so, please explain.**

No

Yes. Please use the comment box to elaborate!

**B9. How would you rate the quality of the conference programme?**

poor

fair

neutral

good

excellent

**B10. What is your overall assessment of the final conference?**

very dissatisfied

dissatisfied

neither dissatisfied nor satisfied

satisfied

very satisfied

**B11. Is there anything else you want to remark regarding the final conference?**

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT PARTNERS**

**Thank you for participating in the following questionnaire for the external evaluation of Good E-Guidance Stories (GEGS)!**

**Section A: External Evaluation: GEGS**

**A1. Please indicate which of the below descriptions best describe the role you perform in GEGS (you may indicate more than one if relevant).**

- Guidance practitioner
- Manager of guidance services or VET provision that is relevant to GEGS
- I am in a role where my position operates at policy or programme level in VET
- None of the above

**A2. Please indicate below the extent to which the following statements describe your current situation.**

*This is a question help text.*

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
I am familiar with (and have experience of) the concept of 'Communities of Practice'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar with (and have experience of participating in) action learning sets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar with (and have experience of) the concept of 'co-creation' in content design and development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have experience of writing and developing curricula and learning materials for guidance practitioners or other professionals involved in VET.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar / experienced in the requirements involved in generating new digital content for online learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar / experienced with aspects of the digitalisation of (non-digitalised) learning contents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar with operating Moodle as an online learning management system (i.e. as a course or programme organiser, administrator or manager).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar with the DigComp framework.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar with the CEDEFOP framework for professionalising career guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am familiar / experienced in the case-study base approach for producing learning materials and using them in diverse learning settings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**A3. Please think of the entire project environment in your region/country (all organizations that were involved or were affected by it in any way). Indicate below your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements.**

*This is a question help text.*

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
The GEGS project has enhanced digital culture in the IAG project environment (involved organizations, region).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through the project, IAG staff have become agents for innovation and quality in vocational education and training (VET).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The project has improved the relevance of IAG practices to the needs of young people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The project enhanced cooperation between policy level and IAG practitioners in the region.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**A4. Please think of your exploitation actions. What will be lasting impacts or benefits of the project on policy and practice in the VET and IAG sector?**

**A5. In which country is your organization located?**

Germany

Greece

Ireland

Italy

UK

Transnational