



PUBLIC SUMMARY

„GEGS – GOOD E-GUIDANCE STORIES “
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Prepared for:

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THE GEGS PROJECT

The project “Good e-Guidance Stories (GeGS)”, initiated in March 2021 and concluding on 30th June 2024, aimed “to modernize Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector across Europe. The project integrated advanced AI-driven e-guidance tools and a multilingual e-learning framework, aiming to achieve systemic impact at multiple governance levels and a cultural shift in IAG.” (GeGS proposal) The main goals of GeGS were to provide IAG practitioners with a comprehensive, engaging, and user-friendly digital training framework and to introduce advanced e-guidance tools in the regions of Berlin, Sardinia and Thessaly. The policy experiment followed the hypothesis that the digitalisation of IAG practices must be accompanied “by systemic and participatory training opportunities on digital and IAG competences to ensure that effective IAG e-services will be designed client-centred, holistic and empowering” (GeGS full proposal).

INNOVATION AND VALIDITY

The first innovation of the partnership with 12 institutions from six countries was to work together with VET-practitioners, senior managers from public organisations and private institutions and AI-experts in so called Communities of Practice (CoP). The CoPs provided challenging and creative learning experiences. The participants reflected innovative approaches in Careers Guidance/IAG service practices, exchange their experience with digital technologies and discussed the organisational changes that go along with implementation of new digital tools. In reflection, all partners appreciate this way of working very much. The 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 builder), 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. The tools were tested in field trials and adopted in several steps according to the feedback from the users. A second 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 in a co-creation process within the CoPs, 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 between the three Public Authorities. Finally, another feature ensuring the validity of the project results were quasi-experimental field trials conducted by SÖSTRA and the present summative external evaluation by abif.

TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AND DISSEMINATION

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 to assess and verify the usefulness of the project partnership. A steep learning curve among project partners is 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 respective regions, nations and 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 mid-term and final conferences for the wider public were important steps in the dissemination of results.

EXPLOITATION AND THE LEGACY OF GEGS

Carried out between 2021 and 2024, the GeGS project was part and has contributed to a broader 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 Thematic Reports, organised regional and transnational Policy Practice Workshops and were also responsible for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the involved policy partners, which fosters the cooperation of regions concerning competence development in the respective field. As the external evaluation results show, 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 representatives 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.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ambitious, multifaceted project design of GeGS was able to fulfil many of the requirements of the time, as 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 and sustainable, as the results were implemented in the official conceptual framework of the regions. Additionally, the project shows that

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.

Further steps to strengthen the projects legacy after its close could be the implementation of the planned contract for the maintenance and use of the new learning framework (newly adopted learning platform with additional learning pathways), the dissemination of results within the CEDEFOP network, the accessibility of the platform to other organisations/countries, e.g. via new project partnerships and a guest access (already implemented). Further steps could be the strengthening of communities of practice with financial and time resources and projects to integrate the Good e-Guidance Stories into training for IAG-staff as well as increasing the relevance of LLL for IAG staff through the development of micro-credentials for GeGS learning contents. The already developed learning platform could be used to feed in new case studies arising from CoPs and to make them available to others. As it is already mentioned in the MoU, 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.