

RESEARCH REPORT

Summary

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Introduction

The development of guidance services for adults within the workforce is a topical concern. Dramatic changes in work structures are placing demands on adults to rethink their careers on an on-going basis. The ACUMEN project aims to provide a wide range of educational materials that are designed and developed, with the latest digital technologies and platforms in mind, to improve the career management skills and competences of adults across Europe. Using the Career Management Skills (CMS) Framework for Scotland as a benchmark, the ACUMEN project partners seek to develop these career management resources with the aim of supporting adults within the workforce or those seeking employment to identify appropriate career progression pathways.



The Career Management Skills (CMS) Framework for Scotland was published in July 2012 and describes career management skills set around 4 themes; Self; Strengths; Horizons; Networks. The Scottish CMS is a competency framework which offers a consistent definition and description of career management skills with the competencies grouped under these four themes as follows:

- Self – these competencies enable individuals to develop their sense of self within society;
- Strengths – these competencies enable individuals to acquire and build on their strengths and to pursue rewarding learning and work opportunities;
- Horizons – these competencies enable individuals to visualise, plan and achieve their career aspirations throughout life;
- Networks – these competencies enable individuals to develop relationships and networks of support

Taken together, the competencies describe a series of overlapping skills, attitudes and capabilities that support an individual's life chances. As such, the Scottish CMS Framework clearly defines the skills that will help individual employees and jobseekers in their career management and outlines how individuals can acquire and apply these career management skills. The ACUMEN project team will build on this framework to develop a complete suite of tools and resources that address each of the above themes.

To ensure that the outputs developed by the ACUMEN project team are appropriate to address the current gaps, a targeted research process was undertaken and national research reports commissioned reflect the current situation in the field of adult guidance in the respective countries. Led by BEST, the research framework comprised both desk-based and field-based research activities and set out to answer the following questions which in turn will inform the future project development actions.

- What skill levels should the new thematic career management resources be designed for?
- What existing resources could be used or re-designed for use in the new career management scenario?
- What are the most appropriate media formats for developing the new resources to ensure that the preferences of adult learners are met and that the potential of on-line learning is harnessed?
- What type of assessment framework would be most appropriate to facilitate the measurement of attainment at all levels?
- What types of pedagogic supports are needed to facilitate the in-service training of adult educators, workforce development experts, employment services providers and human resource managers into this new career management subject arena?

To address these research questions, each project partner began with desk-based research where a short profile of all career guidance supports and services were mapped, identified and summarised. To validate the results of the desk-based research, partners presented the findings of their research efforts to a small research group, composed of suitably qualified and experienced professionals working in the career guidance, coaching and counselling sector. Through these research groups, project partners also gained valuable insight from professionals in the field into the current provision of adult guidance services in each partner country.

The following sections provide a summary of the key findings from the national research processes and national reports developed by project partners from:

- Austria
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Finland
- Germany
- Ireland
- Italy
- United Kingdom

A full copy of the national reports can be access through the project website: acumen.website.



National Research Findings

Austria

The situation of career guidance in Austria is primarily characterised by the fact that a large number of providers are integrated into different systems. In the area of adult education, the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) plays a major role as the leading provider of labour-market related services at national, regional and local level. As a result, the AMS could occupy a central position when it comes to the professionalization of the entire field of work: on the one hand, as an intermediary to other consultants and advisory bodies, on the other hand by the participation in the development of a consistent training development instrument for consultants.

Career information and guidance is also provided by the social partners, especially by the chambers of commerce in the provinces and in regional offices. The chambers provide many career-related services, not only for their members (employers and companies) such as information about courses, but more broadly for young people searching for placements for apprenticeships and for employees looking for education and training, especially that provided by the Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut, the largest institute for vocational (adult) education and training in Austria.

Currently, information, advice and guidance services in Austria are also available online through various initiatives as follows:

- www.bibwiki.at is a professional cross-organisational tool for knowledge management in educational counselling and a unique knowledge pool. It is a wiki, which is filled, maintained and used by consultants from different institutions and with various work areas.
- www.erwachsenenbildung.at is an information portal for teachers and learners in adult education and publishes new reports and announcements on a daily basis. The editors inform interested people from the educational sector about informational systems, the profession, grants, foundations and technical issues in adult education.
- www.bib-atlas.at is an atlas for guidance offers in Austria visualises which organisations in which regions provide guidance and counselling for which target groups. The data is entered and maintained by the providers themselves.
- www.bildungsberatung-online.at offers online guidance and thereby allows for more flexibility in the guidance process.

In Austria, through serious changes in work structures and social conditions, workforces are more and more forced to constantly update and evaluate their career paths. The provision of classical career counselling services at school or in institutions may still be important, but are increasingly inappropriate to meet the needs of adults in the labour market.

This results in the need to use career management services at a time that best suits the needs of the individual. Self-initiative and self-organisation play a major role here, because without these competences such an approach of autonomy would not be possible. The world is changing and the individual has to react to it. Not with fear and inactivity, but with the learning of a set of key competences, with which the necessary flexibility can be achieved.

These key competences can be equated with CMS because of their use to identify useful existing skills, to set new learning objectives and to improve employability and social inclusion. However, learning CMS is not a one-time, concluded activity. It is the constant work on and with these skills, which brings the actual benefit. Identifying opportunities, enhancing skills, increasing the personal value in the labour market, identifying development potentials in the workplace or being able to make important career decisions are just some of the aspects that are associated with the establishment of CMS.

In order to be able to offer a wide range of educational materials and to reach the customer, modern digital technology must be used. Above all, mobile devices play an important role in this context. Similar to this aspect, monitoring and evaluation of CMS or rather the learning progress must be considered. It might be useful to gather some examples of best practices in each country when it comes to these aspects of educational counselling and career guidance. A few inputs may be generated for further consideration.

Cyprus

Career guidance in Adult Education, Vocational Education and Training is primarily offered to adults aged 18 and over through both public and private organisations. From desk-based and field-based research activities, we have learned that in the field of Vocational Education, career services are primarily available to individuals who have joined evening schools. This includes early school-leavers who are returning to school to acquire new skills and gain their High School or Vocational Education diploma. Career services provided to this group are usually part of the services of the school or the college of further education.

Adult Learning in Cyprus is provided to adults of any age group through the adult learning centres, private organisations, public bodies, the Ministry of Education and Culture and schemes supported by HRDA and the Ministry of Labour Law, Welfare and Social Insurance.

The adult learning centres offer language courses and courses for social, financial, personal and cultural development. However, there is no provision for courses on career management and no career support services in these Centres. Therefore, there is a need for the development and adaptation of new curricula which would address career management either within the existing courses or/and with the development on courses on career management. In addition, career support services could be provided through the learning centres.

Some private organisations are implementing projects with the financial support of local and European funding schemes with the aim to provide education and training to individuals that belong in vulnerable groups. These organisations are often providing career management support to the individuals participating in the group as well. However, there are only available during the funding period (usually from 1-3 years) and the number of organisations providing these services is not adequate for the number of people that would like to use their services. The local research group has suggested that the resources developed during the funding period should be available online.

In recent years, there have been many efforts by the government to engage vulnerable groups in employment activities. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance is implementing employment programmes targeting people in vulnerable groups. However, most of the schemes do not provide education and training opportunities to the individuals participating in these schemes. The local research group suggested that training and career guidance supports should be added to these schemes.

The Human Resource Development Association of Cyprus (HRDA) is supporting both human resources and enterprises by implementing a variety of employment schemes and providing subsidized programmes to companies, private and public organisations, universities and colleges and other. These activities include training for management skills.

In the private sector, consulting and recruitment agencies are providing services to job seekers and jobs providers including consulting, trainings and career guidance services. The Youth Board of Cyprus in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture is offering Career Counselling and Career Management Services to young people aged up to 35 years. The EURES Cyprus Network is also providing career support services and job matching to interested individuals. After a review of the key findings of the research and the feedback received from the local group, the following suggestions were made:

1. Career management skills could be acquired at the work place but also through courses, trainings and with interactions within the environment. For this reason, it is important that the courses are structured in way to reflect the experiences of each individual. The resources that would be developed should include quizzes to assess one's knowledge, learning style and competences. Therefore, the thematic areas should be designed in a way to help each individual to measure their competences and skills and progress from their own level of knowledge.
2. Consulting companies, private institutes and HR recruitment agencies have developed resources in the field of career management and career guidance. Many of these resources are copyrighted by private companies and are not available to the public. There are some resources available in Greek that are open to the public but cannot be re-designed for the purposes of the ACUMEN project. Nevertheless, these resources could be used as guiding tools or research sources for the development of the ACUMEN career management resources.
3. The assessment process should be aligned with the teaching methods and should be used to provide feedback to both the learner and the instructor. For each thematic area, a clear set of goals

and objectives should be established in order to help the learner and the teacher assess whether they have achieved their goals and objectives.

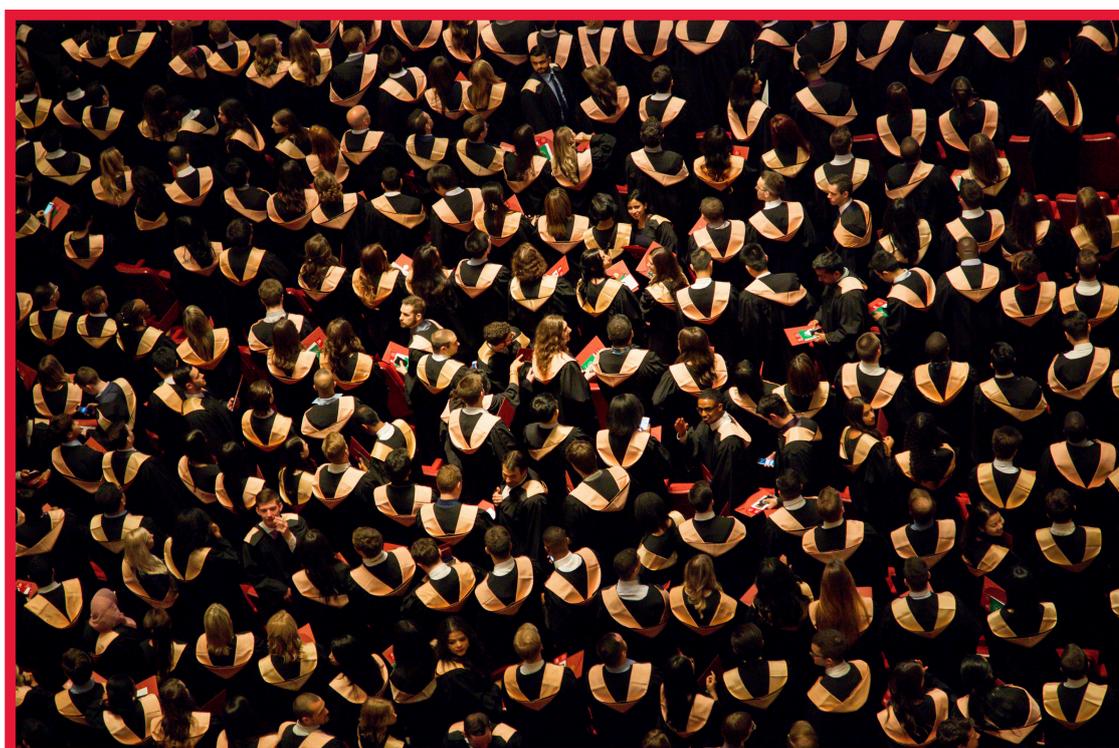
4. The curriculum could be offered in modules and could follow a self-paced learning approach. Each chapter could include a combination of exercises such as written assignments (essays, short exercises and case studies) as well as quizzes.
5. To facilitate successful in-service training of adult educators, career and job coaches, employment service providers and HR managers, the following pedagogic resources are required to support this target group in their new role in developing career management skills and competences in clients: a) Working group meetings, b) Train the trainer course, c) Online hub with learning resources, d) Online forum, e) Directory of available services and material

Overall, career services available to assist individuals in Cyprus to manage their careers are limited. The financial crisis and the global change in the employment industry have affected people from a variety of groups including vulnerable groups and individuals with long careers. While there are efforts to include these groups to the job market, the availability of career guidance services to support their career are limited to private companies and government schemes with a short duration. In conclusion, the new career management scenarios should work towards the sustainability of the existing efforts while also introducing additional programmes and schemes.

Czech Republic

Guidance and counselling systems in the Czech Republic are offered along two lines, each of which has a series of background institutions, very dedicated and highly specialised. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, through its Labour Offices mainly deals with career choices, transitions and new occupations. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports mainly deals with guidance and counselling at schools.

Career guidance in the Czech Republic is carried out by several actors, often specialising in carefully defined target groups. There are no targets to include all in a mainstream offer valid for everybody seem to exist. On the one hand, this helps users in these groups at present. On the other hand, it stresses the difficult issue of creating 'a transparent and coherent lifelong guidance system'. Theoretically, a mainstream approach would have made this easier.



Professionalism seems to be strong in all institutions; this may be as a result of this specialisation.

Inter-operability of guidance services in education and employment and their smooth operation are issues that, since recently, have been gaining in importance. Matching the labour market needs with the potential of the population plays an important role not only in the lives of individuals, but also in the development of society as a whole.

There is room for improvement in guidance services in the labour sector, particularly with regards to the methodological background which lacks clearly defined counselling standards. The system of the continuing training of counsellors also shows certain drawbacks. The counselling system would certainly be improved if a decree was issued on guidance services followed by a uniform and binding directive on the provision of such services

In the market, there exists relatively extensive information, counselling resources and career-related media which must be regularly updated, innovated and expanded. For the sake of a comprehensive approach to the client, it is necessary to set up career guidance services specifically for employed people who would like to change their career in the fast moving Czech labour market. This service would operate in conformity with specific rules and help improve the chances of citizens in the labour market and, at the same time, provide for the needs of employers.

The newly perceived guidance services are becoming an indispensable part of lifelong learning. It is a fact; however, that adult education and lifelong learning are not among the strengths of the education systems in the Czech Republic, and the same holds true for many other countries. In the Czech Republic we may even speak about severe underestimation of this part of education, and an urgent need to redress the situation includes career guidance services.

Finland

The need for developing adults' career management skills is a widely acknowledged issue in Finland and there are several projects researching and developing the subject. However, the projects seem to be disconnected of one another and there is a need for a new compiling approach. Some of the ongoing projects are listed at the bottom of this page.

Career management services are broadly provided in Finland. As became obvious on the desk based research, the main adult career guidance service provider in Finland is the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. It offers versatile services free of charge. The services offered by the ministry are available in all parts of the country and available to all citizens. However, the Ministry



of Economic Affairs and Employment is sometimes considered as a slow and bureaucratic service provider. Therefore there are also new service providers as the labour unions, recruitment companies and private entrepreneurs offering adult career guidance services.

The desk based research showed that there is real need for a new adult career management approach. The new approach should be flexible and available on the demand. It should also take into account the different needs and abilities of the participants. Personal guidance and counselling as an essential part of the new approach was highly emphasized as it was seen as a key factor in helping the adults to learn to identify their strengths and interests, better their weaknesses and learn how to search for appropriate information about the labour market and the careers they want to pursue. The attitudes and courage to keep changing and developing oneself was seen as an important factor in developing adults' career management skills and again the role of personal guidance and counselling was emphasized. The need for high pedagogic and counselling skills of the trainers was also stressed as it was considered of having a high value in helping the adults to adopt the new approach.

There is quite a lot of Finnish material to be used in the later phase of the project. As of English material being used in adult career management guidance and counselling in Finland, the most of the material is being produced somewhere else. The material considered as useful for this project include exercises to identify strengths and interests, information about the positioning of graduates in the labour market and instructed online CVs.

Recommendations

The new approach would be best conducted as consisting both in-class training and online learning. In-class training would enhance the social (face to face) and teamwork skills and courage the participants to speak out and express themselves orally, all needed in today's labour market. In-class learning would be especially important for people with difficulties with social interaction. The online learning, on the other hand, could enhance self-reflection, self-initiative and goal-directedness. Long-term exercises and analysing participants' own thoughts, attitudes, skills and development in all sectors mentioned could benefit the participants in developing their career management skills. The websites, platforms and applications used in online learning should be easy to use.

Germany

The desk based research showed that guidance and counselling offers are mainly available for unemployed and jobseeking people. The National Employment Agency and the Job Centres offer a large variety of guidance and counselling, often subcontracted to third parties. These can be private as well as non-profit organisations. Guidance practitioners in public services must meet the requirements of the National Employment Agency. These requirements can be e.g. a tertiary degree in pedagogic or social work and a relevant working experience in the field of coaching and guidance. Nevertheless, 'career adviser' or 'coach' is not a protected term in Germany and formally no legal minimum standard or consistent access requirements for this professional field exists. This also applies to self-employed guidance practitioners. Independently from his or her profession, education or study everybody can call him- or herself a coach or career advisor, and there are more than 300 coaching training programmes on offer from different providers in Germany. Associations in the field of career guidance have defined quality standards and seek to establish ethical guidelines and core competencies for coaching, but they are not legally binding.

There are also some free of charge guidance opportunities for employees but not so many and furthermore employed persons often do not know about these funding possibilities.

All experts involved in the discussion agreed that it is necessary not only to support unemployed people through learning and better training but also to promote the potential of employed people and support and accompany them in managing their education and career. Regarding the future challenges in our society which demand an increased need for multiple career choices, it is evident that well developed and professional education and career guidance will play a significant role in solving these problems.

In the same time the significance of information on education, career and employment on the internet is increasing considerably with the continuous development of modern information and communication technologies and the changing use of new media. The research group identified this as one crucial aspect of the whole topic. The enlargement of career management skills is one aim of

the project. Another has to be ICT skills. We need to develop our learning platform in a way that low-skilled persons understand how to use it and feel motivated to widen their competences on their own by using our platform.

The questions of the online tools should be balanced between guided questions that lead the participants through the tool, and more psychologically advanced questions that lead by the use of careful wording to more surprising and unexpected results that then help the participant to integrate new perspectives into his or her self-concept.

To ensure to answer the needs of this heterogeneous target group of low-skilled employees, it is important that the tools include and address participants from all different backgrounds. With regard to questionnaires this would mean, for example, to offer basic and advanced versions to fulfil the needs of everyone.

The tricky part is that the tools cannot provide an open conversation comparable to a face-to-face coaching session; as they are online tools they can only offer digital binary questions to work with. In order to still guarantee a comparable learning environment, the variety of tools is indispensable. To motivate the participants, the tools should include both a passive and an active constituent: The participant should gain new knowledge by watching videos, reading comic strips or interviews. On the other hand, he or she should also creatively engage with the topics by for example working with tasks, or learn aspects about him or herself by answering questionnaires or playing online-games that serve a certain learning purpose. It would be advisable to offer a print-out, i.e. something graspable, at the end of each module, so that the participants have a feedback they can draw on and which they can also take with them to further coaching sessions, for example. This could be implemented as a running text feedback or more visually by using a graph to show the end result of their self-assessment and learning process.

From their daily work the experts know how important the face-to-face contacts and the conversations in this field are and that an online platform cannot completely replace this interaction. If further coaching sessions are not possible, the learners should at least be motivated to discuss their results with family and friends and look for support in their own network.

Ireland

From our desk-based and field-based research activities, we have learned that guidance in Vocational Education and Training in Ireland is primarily aimed at learners and adults aged 18 years+ who are involved in VET initiatives and programmes which are typically accredited between levels 1 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. As such, some of the adult learners participating in these programmes may have left school early and are now returning to education; or alternatively, they may wish to re-skill in a new profession or to further develop their skills in their current field of expertise. Adult guidance services which are delivered in conjunction with these VET programmes tend to be offered by either institutes of further education, local Youthreach centres or through more general education programmes offered to adults who have left school early and who now wish to return to education.

Guidance provision to these learners is provided primarily by the Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service (AEGI). AEGI is an initiative which is supported by the Department of Education and Skills and is operated by the National Centre for Guidance in Education. This initiative is implemented locally by career counsellors working to deliver Adult Education Guidance and Information Services (AEGIS), which are offered across Ireland by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). In total, AEGI oversees and manages 40 adult education guidance centres offered by these 16 ETBs (National Centre for Guidance in Education, 2016); (AONTAS - the National Adult Learning Organisation, 2016); (Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board, 2016).

Adult Education Guidance services are also provided by Meath Partnership and similar type organisations through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). Similar to the AEGIS initiative, this service is independent, confidential and free of charge for jobseekers and worker in part-time and vulnerable employments. Through this programme, SICAP career specialists assist individuals to explore their VET pathways; identify and set career goals; plan and implement strategies to help to progress their career; uncover barriers which may be impeding their career success and identify strategies to overcome these obstacles; and support individuals through advice and coaching to achieve their goals. This service is offered to through both private, one-to-one sessions and

also through facilitated 'Return to Employment' workshops; which are typically delivered over four sessions (12 hours) and centring on topics such as career planning; structured job searching; CV and cover letter preparation; interview skills and coaching, and exploring options for returning to education. Supplementary to these local and national guidance services providers, there are innumerable private HR, Recruitment and Coaching companies and individuals in Ireland who offer services to employees and jobseekers in terms of career management. These services are focused on providing guidance and counselling, and are fee-paying. They tend to provide more tailored and personalised services to individuals in terms of career progression, assisted job-searching and organising mock interviews. These private companies and individuals also provide coaching for people facing a major life change including finding employment for the first time, setting up a business or retiring.

From a review of the feedback received from our local working group on the topic of career management, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Career development is an ongoing, lifetime process experienced by an individual through their interaction with their environment and often skills and competencies can be learned through work experience, training and period of unemployment also. Therefore, the ACUMEN project team should recognise that related competences, learning and experience do not proceed in a linear manner throughout one's career; i.e. basic to advanced; and should develop resources accordingly.
2. The thematic career management resources should be designed in such a way that is progressive in nature and that individuals can measure their competences and skills and enter the course or use the resources at a level that is appropriate for them.
3. Many of the resources which currently exist in the field of career management are available from and copyrighted by private HR consultants and training providers. While these courses are topical and relevant to the ACUMEN project; they are not available for our project team to re-design and re-use in the development of the ACUMEN career management scenario. Resources which are suitable can be found on www.careersportal.ie; www.businessballs.com, as well as open source resources accessible through Slideshare; however it may be difficult to validate the quality of materials published on Slideshare due to the open nature of the platform.
4. Assessments included in the ACUMEN resources should be designed as tools for enhancing teaching and learning activities and not solely as an evaluation mechanism. To use assessments in this way, the assessments should be aligned to the prescribed learning outcomes of the curriculum.
5. Some effective assessment methods include online discussions, where learners can network together and apply and enhance their skills in problem-solving and critical thinking; short quizzes at the end of curriculum units, with more complex 'test your knowledge' quizzes at the end of each module, which focus on topics such as setting career goals and producing a personal career management plan, for example.
6. Quizzes facilitated through the ACUMEN e-learning platform, should be simple, multiple-choice tests which can be auto-corrected so that they can still be used to assess learning once the ACUMEN project has ended.
7. To facilitate successful in-service training of adult educators, career and job coaches, employment service providers and HR managers, the following pedagogic resources are required to support this target group in their new role in developing career management skills and competences in clients:
 - Train-the-trainer programme or induction to the new courseware; resilience training for how to help clients to bounce-back and face and overcome challenges; online repository of scenario-based resources, case studies, curricula, training materials for job coaches; online platform to direct clients too; forum to network with other adult educators/coaches/employment services; directory of available local services and supports; skills-based training materials to promote competency development and to facilitate the development of key life skills in jobseekers and clients.
8. On review of the Scottish CMS Learning Outcome Matrix the Irish working group contributed an additional learning outcome as follows: "Be better able to promote and communicate their skills and talents and develop career-specific networks aimed at building their contacts and connections in the workplace."

Italy

The desk-based research showed us that guidance and counselling offers are very diverse and not standardized in Italy.

According to ISFOL (2011), the registered centres (the majority) which have declared to carry out guidance activities represent:

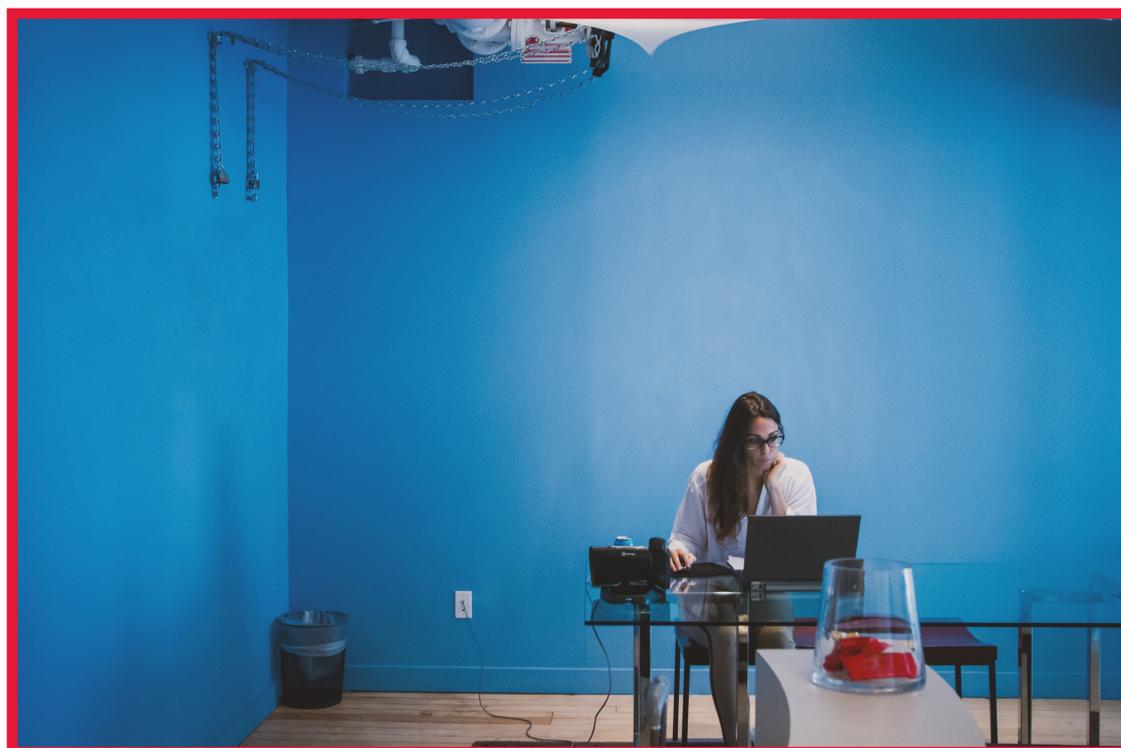
- 80% the company system;
- 57% the vocational training system;
- 96% the centres of guidance and employment system;
- 80% the educational system;
- 99% the university and higher education system.

Career Management Skills (CMS) and career education were formally defined and regulated in the National Guidelines for Lifelong Education in 2013. There is currently no national CMS framework. Career guidance functions are divided between the School Districts (educational guidance) and Regions (professional guidance). The presence of particular targets has also created the necessity for ad hoc information centres (for women, immigrants, etc....).

After the reform of the Italian Constitution that in 2001 has given more autonomy to the Regions, the Central Government has to agree with the Regions the general framework under which careers guidance is delivered. The Provinces are in charge for managing the careers guidance services for adults and young people 14-18 who are not working nor studying, while the delivery of careers guidance to students is entrusted to schools and universities.

Besides activities carried out in Secondary schools ("training" guidance aimed at enhancing self-knowledge and "information" guidance dealing with the training offer available and its connections with the labour market) and in Universities (aimed at supporting University students in choosing their training path of specialization or in understanding the dynamics of the labour market and the related job opportunities), we will briefly highlight some initiatives concerning AE guidance (both concerning unemployed but also normal services on career management).

The main services provided are: guidance interviews, Bilans de Compétence, assistance during job searching, assistance during job placement.



Career counselling for adults and NEETs is provided by Associations of Enterprises, Professional Registries, Bilateral Bodies of the social partners involved in different sectors, private agencies working in the social sector, temporary job agencies, etc.

A new initiative is represented by the "Informagiovani" service, provided by Municipalities and Provinces, together with Associations, Agencies, and private bodies working in the social sector.

The professional profile of the guidance practitioner is not officially recognized in Italy. People working in this field have different backgrounds (Economics, Law, Psychology, Political Sciences and Educational Sciences) and different roles (adult educators, workforce development experts, employment services providers, human resource managers). This is why we thought to involve in the field-based research all these types of professionals.

The Italian research group expressed full appreciation for the project and agreed that the new thematic career management resources should be designed for different levels. Participants observed that Career management skills are extremely useful and valuable both for those who work and for those who are about to enter the labour market. Nonetheless, they are important at all stages and the differences among various phases of one's own working life should be considered when thinking of different skill levels: before starting work; moving beyond education towards work; while in work; when not working; preparing to leave or reduce work. The idea of levels also provides the potential to help evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to enhance career management skills. One of the participants suggested that we might imagine skill levels along a continuum, where awareness of one's own skills and capabilities represents the basic level, autonomy is at an intermediate step and proactivity is at the end (highest level).

The experts indicated and described different online collection of resources that could be used or re-designed for the new career management scenario.

According to the participants, the most appropriate media formats are definitely short videos, both tutorials and examples of inspiring people who succeeded in their career management.

They might provide examples and help people gain motivation from them. Furthermore, they might help people, particularly adult learners, to reflect on their own abilities and on the different aspects of career management. Online games and online assessment tools were also mentioned among the media format that might also be useful to reflect and play on contents.

Participants listed different assessment strategies. These strategies had varying levels of formality and only some of them might be used in online programme: self-assessment through multiple choice tests or vignettes that illustrate some typical career management situations; peer assessment, questionnaires administered to people who work with the assessed person or who know him/her in depth; career portfolio and records of achievement; observation; structured interviews; assignments or project works where they can demonstrate the attainment at all levels.

Some participants suggested that formal assessment gives value to CMS processes; however the majority of them stated that formalized assessment should not be a priority.

Some of them pointed out that the simplest and more cost-benefit efficient would be a (guided) self-assessment against objective criteria.

Different pedagogic supports were mentioned as tools to facilitate the in-service training of the indicated target users (adult educators, workforce development experts, employment services providers and human resources managers). Among them: online portals; Handbooks with targeted information; technical guidelines for implementation; evaluation guidelines and/or assessment tools.

The participants also mentioned the contents of the training and the different tools that a professional should use (possess) to help his/her clients acquire career management skills: coaching courses/tools; knowledge of different assessment tests/tools; ability to access information concerning the world of the current work and especially concerning the future development of professionalism.

Some participants indicated that a specific training programme for professionals should include classroom simulation moments of case studies and/or of real cases.

The members of the research group discussed all five learning outcomes of the Scottish Career Management Skills Framework and validated them. They also suggested to include further learning outcomes like: problem solving, i.e. the ability to "frame" problems in order to find a solution; communication and negotiations, i.e. be able to communicate one's own skills and talents, to negotiate and enhance their opportunities.

United Kingdom

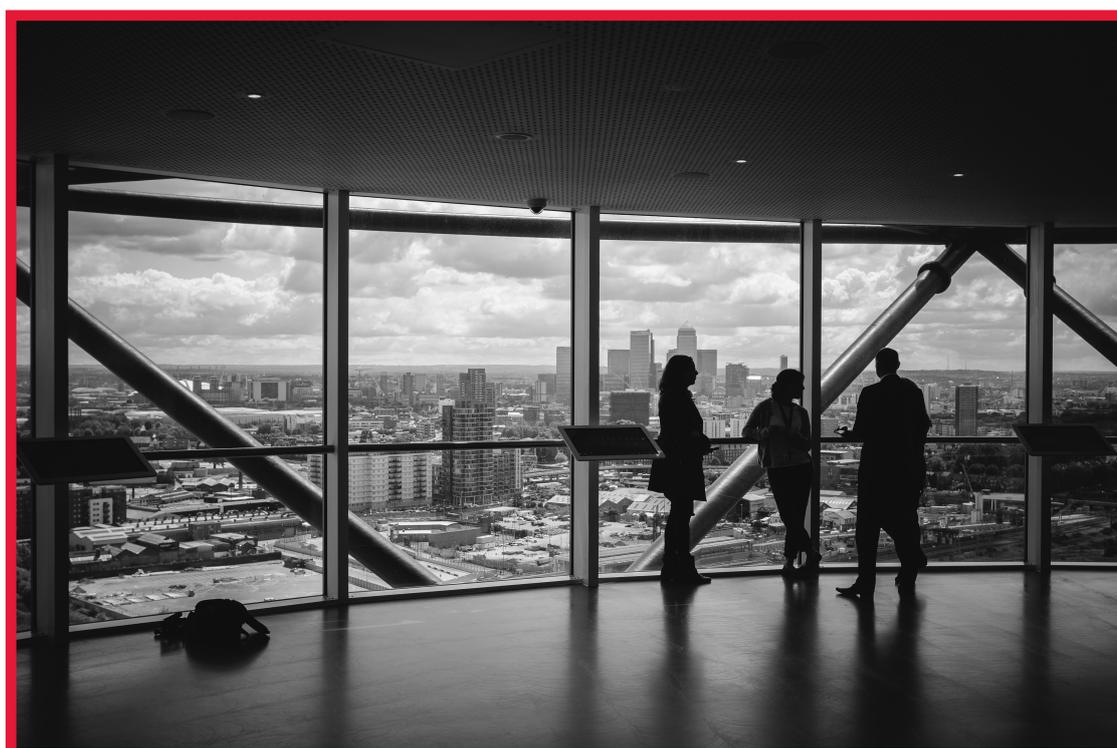
We can see from the research – both desk-based and field-based – that there is a difference between the public and private sectors in the UK and also that a wide variety of career management resources of varying quality exist. Some programmes are aimed at school leavers and/or university graduates and are highly structured, aiming to deliver candidates along tried and tested, well-trodden career paths, as in the Social Services and Care as well as for the NHS. Some have also been highly rated and reviewed by independent experts.

Libraries, job centres, adult education and careers advisory services provide a helpful starting point for those adults seeking to further their careers, when they already have jobs, or those looking to retrain in a new field or change professions entirely. The UK government also has a careers service available online and in various other media, the National Careers Service, which aims to cater to all. Numerous other private companies also seek to fulfil candidates' expectations, usually at a price.

There is a real need in the UK for quality self-use career management resources for low-income skilled or unskilled workers as the labour market constantly fluctuates. The poverty rate in the UK is ever-increasing and many people find themselves stuck in a rut, with no hope of getting out of a vicious circle of low-paid jobs, lack of funding from government, no time to access publicly-available free resources due to general exhaustion and lack of awareness about where to find these. This ultimately affects the productivity of the nation (Wolf, 2015). Therefore the new resources need to be readily available, easily understood, short and accessible to cater to this growing population.

Additionally there is a need for stable and reliable resources for such skills as interview techniques, mock interview practise, CV-writing skills, cover-letter checking and confidence and resilience training, IT and new technology training as well as First Aid and general Health and Safety Awareness training, which covers all sectors and provides a useful input to the candidate's own career management and skills profile. Also, due to the rise of the number of start-ups in the UK, basic business training could be more easily accessible (how to write a business plan, how to obtain finance etc.) as currently public resources for this are accessible only via libraries and information services, not for self-use. In some instances certain banks may provide such help via their online web portals.

One of the main points to arise from the research is that these resources should be free of charge and easily accessible – and then for employers, HR staff, careers advisors etc. to be able to point candidates to these resources quickly and easily. Since many existing resources are currently private or copyrighted they are of little use to the general population, especially those in vulnerable or low-paid jobs. Neither are these private resources available for the public, including ACUMEN consortium, to incorporate into their own career management resources, so this source cannot be relied upon.



However, the publicly available resources such as the UK government National Careers Service can be used as a springboard or inspiration when designing new resources. Other open-source resources can also be harnessed in a similar way; however they must be checked first for quality control as they are of varying quality and usefulness.

Therefore online platforms seem like a good idea. Time pressure issues were also raised, so the resources should be quickly obtained and then once opened; get to the point very quickly as most people are busy enough doing their everyday jobs. Importantly, the value of face-to-face contact with supervisors or advisors was stressed by the majority, so the self-use online tools do not overshadow contact with real people, but instead offer a complementary service for the candidate to review in their own time and then bring the results to a face-to-face meeting for discussion. In this way the online tools enhance the face-to-face sessions. These sessions could take any format, whether they are one-on-one careers discussions or whole-workshops or anything in between. Self-assessments could also take place in the same vein.

The thematic career management resources should be modular in nature and appeal to a wide variety of skill levels; as the research showed, there are individuals with varying levels of competencies and experience in their fields. Rather than being patronising, the career resources can then be targeted to the appropriate end user at the level pertinent to them. The resources can be progressive in nature and build on each other while still existing as standalone modules to dip into.

The new resources should be primarily visual and video-based, for example short videos (5-8 minutes) with bullet points to emphasise the main ideas and in order to facilitate recollection; they should be brief and not overwhelming with information but instead a distillation on all that is pertinent to a particular field – remembering that they are not a replacement for a real face-to-face discussion but instead a tool to enhance this. There should also be provision for downloadable PDFs and short factsheets so that candidates can review these in their own time prior to a face-to-face meeting; in a similar fashion the short self-assessments online can be completed by candidates before meeting supervisors or advisors. All these are tools to make the actual face-to-face meetings more efficient, and so that both the candidates and their advisors have some idea where to start. For instance, they can be used to more accurately gauge the candidate's level and therefore not appear patronising by covering old ground. Quizzes also play a useful part here in order to test the candidates' knowledge.

In order to facilitate in-service training of all parties involved in career management, workshops and special inductions could be conducted in order to introduce them to these new resources and materials and how best to tailor them to their candidates. An online portal (e.g. ACUMEN website), a kind of one-stop shop with information, advice and a directory of services, would serve here. If both candidates and their advisors had access to this portal it would facilitate confidence in making decisions about their career. Regular contact with candidates and regular feedback and appraisals, where possible, also scored highly with the local control group.

In summary the ACUMEN new thematic career management resources should be well-designed, draw upon existing publicly-available, open resources where possible from the UK, be online, modular, progressive and brief; visual and video-based with bullet points, and most importantly be easily accessible and readily available for both the candidates themselves to self-use as well as their advisors in order to enhance, not substitute, the crucial face-to-face meetings and regular feedback as well as to make them more efficient and hopefully more enjoyable. When the resources are paired at an appropriate level with a particular candidate, they can benefit the most from them and maximise their time with their advisor. In turn, it will make the careers advisors' jobs much easier as they have something concrete to work with. Since career management is not a finite end unto itself but an ongoing and lifelong process, with the appropriate new resources aimed at the correct level of the target audience, both the candidate and their advisor will be able to more expertly plan and monitor the progression of their career throughout their lifetime.

Conclusions

The results of the desk based research show that career management services are very diverse in the participating countries (Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom) and the acquisition of career management skills is not tied to a single provider. There is a wide range of public, private and intermediary providers, which are concerned with career support under different approaches and purposes. Focusing on specific groups or sectors is, in principle, a good idea if a wide range of tailored services is offered. Unfortunately, according to local reports, the implementation is only partially successful. This division of services into various areas results in a large number of programmes, offers and services, all of which act separately from each other and thus do not form a uniform picture of career management support. There is no homogenous approach, but a large number of self-acting providers, which indicates a lack of quality standards and practices.

Against this background, it is an important endeavour to focus the ACUMEN project in a direction that takes into account existing problems and needs as well as not fully implemented core ideas and attempts to encounter them with innovative solutions. The primary goal of this project is therefore the development of online resources which are easily accessible and can be used by adults with different skill levels. Complicated, non-user-friendly access to career management services, as often shown in the desk based research, leads to individuals being overstrained and not taking advantage of existing services or notice of them at all.

The development of new educational materials and tools is characterised by a new concept that is flexible and available on demand. The focus should not be placed on a particular target group, rather the idea should be promoted that all individuals can benefit from a lifelong learning process of development their career management skills. In this sense, ACUMEN addresses both adults who are already employed are equally addressed as those unemployed in order to develop themselves continuously in a constantly changing labour market. The emergence of new career paths and labour market transitions are of particular importance in this regard and must be taken into account when developing ACUMEN resources. Here emphasis should be put on career management, not on career guidance.

Results from the field research with the control groups in participating countries, show that future ACUMEN participants must be in a position to organise their own activities and to demonstrate their own initiative when working with the learning materials. In order to ensure this aspiration, it is necessary to pick up each individual where it is, which means the resources have to be adapted to the individual levels and needs of the participants. One way of addressing this issue is by giving participants the opportunity to assess their own skills in order to include their previous experience. When one speaks of different levels, however, not only skills and knowledge are meant. Individuals are at different stages in their lives. Some have not yet entered the working world, other are already employed or may have recently lost their jobs. The solutions offered by ACUMEN must necessarily correspond to the diversity of people so that the general use is meaningful. Modern technology and new media must be used to develop the tools. The development of career management skills goes hand in hand with the further development of technologies. In the use of modern technologies lies an opportunity as participants expand their ICT skills by using the developed resources. In doing so, it must be taken into account that some participants may have basic or no ICT skills, and thus a tutorial or similar would be necessary, so that the motivation to continue and deepen is maintained.

Another important point concerns the balance between face-to-face contact with an adult educator provider and online activities. A personal guidance and counselling is usually considered essential and can help identifying personal strengths and interests and provides the opportunity to work on weaknesses. Developed tools cannot and should not replace this benefit. Nevertheless, the tools must be manifold and characterised by variety, for example by the use of different learning resources (video, case studies, etc.). Face-to-face contact and online resources should at best support each other. Both elements can work together to achieve a common goal and are not to be viewed as mutually independent entities. This guiding principle, of course, also requires certain skills that adult educators must possess. For this reason, the foreseen in-service training offered by ACUMEN ensures that those professionals are equipped with the necessary know-how to better support adults in develop their career management skills. These necessary skills should include a comprehensive understanding of the ACUMEN model and its resources. Simulations of real scenarios in classrooms or workshops could also be conceived in order to gain practical experience.

In order to see whether the learning process has been successful and participants have made use of it, the outcome or the progress of learning has to be assessed. The assessment process should be linked to the learning methods and should provide feedback for both adults and providers. To achieve this goal, certain objectives and outcomes for each covered topic area must be defined. In this way it is possible to determine the achieved success and the potential for improvement. The main point is that the activity does not end after the assessment. It is imaginable to implement measures to improve the entire process and thus to make it more effective, if the assessment asks for it. Assessments that are included should be a fruitful aspect for teaching and learning by enhancing it and not be seen as a pure evaluation. A possible approach for assessments can be online discussions, where participants can connect with others in order to develop their skills and to work on solutions for specific problems. Other methods such as quizzes or written assignments can also be applied. The simplest and cheapest solution might be to have assisted self-assessment performed. A combination of methods, always under the perspective of joint feedback on further development, could prove effective.

On review of the Scottish CMS Learning Outcome Matrix, it can be concluded that in general all participating countries validated the framework and considered the specific skills defined for the four themes – Self, Strengths, Horizons, and Networks - essential for effective career management also in the frame of ACUMEN. The table below summaries the main recommendations provided by the local research control groups to the following inquiries:

- a) Access and use effectively the full range of career management products and services at a time and place that suit individuals' needs
- b) Identify opportunities to develop individuals' learning goals and employability skills and understand how the labour market works: how to find a job; to appreciate how and why industries and individual jobs within them are changing; and what sort of skills they need to progress
- c) Identify how individuals can progress within the workplace
- d) Access the services individuals need, with partners working together to signpost them or, where appropriate, coordinate an integrated package of services
- e) Be better able to take career decisions, to manage change and uncertainty by forward planning and to make confident choices for themselves

Experts from Ireland suggested an additional learning outcome: "Be better able to promote and communicate their skills and talents and develop career-specific networks aimed at building their contacts and connections in the workplace". In Italy, experts also suggested as further learning outcomes: "Problem solving" and "Communication and negotiations".

	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)
Austria	For this purpose, individuals need self-organisation and self-initiative skills	This should also include: setting own learning goals, building up future perspectives and take the dynamism of a constantly changing labour market into account	Required is learning on demand, flexibility of the workforce and the adaptation to the needs of the modern world	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
Cyprus	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
Czech Republic	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
Finland	It can be challenged especially for people with different kinds of neuropsychological difficulties of disorders. Personal guidance and counselling was seen an essential support	It requires quite a lot of self-imposing attitude and will to keep changing and developing oneself. Again, personal guidance and counselling was seen as a necessity in the CMS	Same thoughts as for the first two questions were stated for this one	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
Germany	Validated without recommendations	It might be challenging for some persons and therefore it is recommend some external support to help individual to achieve these outcomes	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
Ireland	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
Italy	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations
United Kingdom	Importance of face-to-face contact and free resources	Not consensual. It was stressed the need to be up-to-date CMS resources and for an integrated package of services	Validated without recommendations	Validated without recommendations	Not consensual. But was confirmed the need to manage career choices and progression within the work place and manage forward planning



Project Number: 2016-1-UK01-KA204-024334



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
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