

# arQus

European University Alliance

## **Task 2.1: Preventive Early Career Education August 2022**

### **Final Report**

## 1. Premise

The Arqus European University Alliance brings together the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padova and Vilnius, seven longstanding comprehensive research universities who share extensive experience in joint projects and a common profile as internationalized institutions with deep regional engagement in medium-sized cities.

Arqus aspires to build on the member universities' sound prior experience in cooperation in order to achieve a high level of integration in its members' policies and action plans in order to:

- enhance the education of critically engaged European and global citizens who are able and willing to contribute to a multicultural, multilingual and inclusive Europe which is open to the world;
- increase and improve the joint research capacity of the partner universities;
- better respond to the grand societal challenges of the 21st century in Europe and beyond.

Through enhanced sustained cooperation, the Arqus European University Alliance work together as a laboratory for institutional learning in an innovative and open way to:

- a) Attain a substantially higher level of quality in education and research, and deeper societal, cultural and civic engagement.
- b) Educate engaged critical European citizens to become competent decision-makers.
- c) Become a model for European university integration.
- d) Disseminate its experience, challenges and successes at European and global level.

One of the Arqus European University Alliance's major goals for 2025 is widening access and inclusion. Specifically, the Alliance aims to promote widening access for diverse student and staff populations, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and attracting talent from less represented groups. The Alliance aims to develop shared policies for inclusion and diversity for all members of the university community.

**Action Line 2 “Widening Access, Inclusion and Diversity” is dedicated to this thematic complex.**

Specifically, Arqus recognizes the essential role played in early guidance and counselling in helping school children to make informed decisions about participating in higher education and choosing a career, and in the reduction and eradication of gender and other bias. Within the task 2.1 Preventive early career education, Arqus partner universities thus share best practice and existing intervention models and academics with primary and secondary school pupils, teachers and careers advisors. Career education aims at increasing primary school pupils' knowledge of professional activities and role models, their self-determination, autonomous capacities to make a choice and soft-skills from very early stages. Arqus shares models of, and resources for, preventive early career education activities to be implemented locally by each university. An annual joint Alliance training event was organized for local experts, who then shared their expertise at local training events for university and school staff involved and for future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors through the Arqus Faculties of Education.

## 2. Output (Expected results)

The task 2.1 Preventive early career education is expected to share models of preventive early career education through the training of experts and shared resources. Specifically, the following outputs are expected:

- a) Sharing models and recommendations for preventive early career education activities to be implemented locally by each university.
- b) Sharing counselling resources through Arqus Portal

- c) Organizing Annual joint Alliance training events for local experts (3 participants per university, 3 days)
- d) Sharing materials on Arqus Portal for training of future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors at Arqus Faculties of Education

### 3. Activities undertaken, and results obtained

- a) **Sharing models and recommendations for preventive early career education activities to be implemented locally by each university.**

During the training events, webinars and meetings organized, Arqus partners debated and agreed with the international literature about the idea that career development is a significant component for children's positive development. According to Watson, Nota, and McMahon (2015), guest editors of the special issue 'Childhood Career Development' published in 2015 by the International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance (Volume 15, issue 2), it has been highlighted that childhood plays a paramount role in career development and element central to career design, such as vocational exploration, career awareness, occupational aspirations, career interests, occupational knowledge, and career adaptability, begin to form during the childhood years (Hartung, 2017; Hartung et al., 2005; Watson & McMahon, 2005).

Theoretical frameworks (e.g., Life-span, life-space theory; Super, 1980, 1990; Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, 1981; and the most recent the Life Design International Research Group, Savickas et al., 2009), and empirical studies have been presented and discussed supporting that initial social interactions with the world of work happen during this period (Hartung, 2015; Ginevra et al., 2021). It was emphasized that it is essential to adopt a lifelong and preventive perspective and to consider childhood as a crucial formative period in the process of career development. Although it is not urgent for children and youth to make imminent career decisions, it is important to start promoting positive career development trajectories during this developmental age (Hartung, 2016).

Given the early nature of career development and its close connection to other areas of positive development, Arqus partners agreed that career interventions need to be implemented as early as possible, i.e. from early childhood. These career interventions should offer opportunities for all children to envision positive career paths, stimulate understanding and acquisition of competencies and resources crucial to career planning, and contribute to quality of life and psychosocial well-being. These career interventions should also apply to children with disabilities who tend to be at greater risk in their career planning processes and to be more at risk of being excluded during adulthood from the world of work (Lee et al., 2015; Chen & Chan, 2014). Emphasis should be given to knowledge of the world of work, the issues of decent work, equity, and professional inclusion, especially as beliefs about the world of work and occupations begin during childhood and are crucial for career development (Hartung, 2015). Children should be stimulated to have a cooperative vision of the world of work, to recognize that diversity and collaboration among diverse individuals make the work contexts more meaningful and efficacious, and should be exposed to multiple career options that could expand their career knowledge and grow their self-concept and avoiding stereotypical beliefs about occupations. Moreover, given the recent attention in the scientific literature on career guidance to inclusion and sustainability, human rights, and social justice in career and life interventions for the construction of personal and professional projects, career interventions should incorporate individual and collective reflections to promote collective empowerment and critical consciousness development to enable children and youth with and without disabilities and vulnerabilities to design their lives (García-Feijoo et al., 2020; Nota et al., 2020).

Arqus partners agreed that career guidance professionals serve an important social role in ‘preparing’ children and youth for the current and future world of work, characterized by phenomena as globalization, technological progression, precariousness, unemployment, that have produced substantial changes in the labour market and have deep consequences also affecting the processes of future career design, especially among younger people. Employment and work are more flexible, career transitions are more recurrent, and career paths are far less predictable than two decades ago (Guichard, 2022; Savickas, 2015). Moreover, a high number of crises and global challenges are shaping the future of humanity; examples of such challenges include increasing social injustice, the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the polarization of wealth and work, and the increase in population movements, with rising migration rates that are affecting the destruction of natural resources (Nota et al., 2020). Even children and youth appear to be influenced from these conditions; generally, they tend to have negative perceptions about their future, that is, discomfort, uneasiness, and confusion, and limited propensity to think about multiple options and improvements in their future living conditions (Nota et al., 2020). This seems particularly true for youth who live in western countries with higher rate of unemployment and precariousness (e.g., Italy, Spain, Lithuania). In relation to the challenges of the current world of work, Arqus partners shared the idea that it is crucial to help primary and secondary students develop the resources to prepare them for their career future and to cope with any difficult times that they may be going through.

Considering the complex role of career guidance professionals, the training is an important issue, to make their professional actions more effective. Although there are no shared indications in the various countries on the training of career guidance professionals, according to the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC, <http://www.esvdc.org/>), the guidelines recently published by the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance & Counselling (NICE, 2012, 2015, <http://www.nice-network.eu/>), and the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC, <http://www.larios.fisppa.unipd.it/ecadoc/>) Arqus partners discussed that, through the attendance of high-quality post-university training courses, career guidance professionals should acquire knowledge and highly qualified skills, a scientifically based and up-to-date conceptual background, attitudes and values in order to better prepare future generations to cope with the complexity, uncertainty, and global challenges that characterize the labour market. It was also specified that the training programmes in Career Guidance and Counselling, in line with relevant United Nations declarations, should reflect current societal challenges and labour market needs and promote the inclusion of all citizens and their full participation in society, education and employment.

Finally, pilot experiences, good practices and career education interventions realized in some universities were discussed and shared by Arqus partners. The career education activities proposed by external experts and career scholars of the University of Granada, University of Graz, and especially University of Padova aimed at increasing primary and secondary school students’ career development. Some of these programs have been already published in the international literature and can be implemented by adequately trained counsellors and teachers.

**b) Sharing counselling resources through Arqus Portal**

Materials (e.g., articles, reports, examples of career education programs) were shared in the Arqus Moodle (<https://elearning.unipd.it/ufficiapplicazioni/course/view.php?id=291>) and Arqus Drive. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10jT59CKaSZ6jAQE4QtXpM8Km3PbAtEh>

All materials will be accessible to external users.

**c) Organizing annual joint alliance training events for local experts**

Due to the pandemic situation, Arqus partners organized only two of the three planned training events. Two webinar sessions open to counsellors, primary school teachers, university students and professors involved in teaching and education activities were additionally realized. Both webinars were recorded and will be available on Arqus Portal.

- The **first training event** on preventive early career education addressed to task force members was hosted by Larios Laboratory (Laboratory of Research and Intervention on Career Guidance; <http://www.larios.fisppa.unipd.it>) of the University of Padova and coordinated by Dr. Maria Cristina Ginevra, from February 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> 2020. This was the first initiative of the Arqus European University Alliance task force 2.1 to share best practice and existing preventive models for early career education. It was an opportunity to engage in a series of collaborative working groups with the purpose of learning about the challenges, activities, and policies of career education in the seven countries involved (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Spain). Six working group sessions were organized, focused on the following six topics:
  - Topic 1: main Fears and Challenges Experienced by Young People in their Country
  - Topic 2: organization of the school and university system
  - Topic 3: overview of Career Guidance
  - Topic 4: career Guidance and Inclusion
  - Topic 5: accreditation frameworks for professionals delivering career guidance
  - Topic 6: good Career Education Practices

In addition to the 2.1 task force members of the University of Padova, colleagues from the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, and Vilnius participated in the first training event.

- The **second training event** was organized by the University of Padova (Dr. Silvia Preciso), with the collaboration of University of Granada, and aimed at offering an overview on the most recent and accredited theoretical frameworks and new tools for [or: in the field of] career guidance. In addition, some practical examples of different pedagogical approaches in early childhood and primary education were introduced and aimed at offering an overview of the most recent and accredited *theoretical frameworks* in the *new tools to be applied* field of career guidance, together with some practical examples and in the different educational frameworks for the benefit of children and young. The one-day training event, coordinated by Dr. Juan Luis Benítez Muñoz (University of Granada), was held on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Three sessions were organized, focusing on:
  - Early career education: a practical guide to developing a guidance project in primary education
  - Promoting STEM among primary school students
  - Bringing university closer to primary education: experiences and activities.

- Webinar “Life and Vocational Guidance Project - Education Delegation of Granada” (June 7th, 2021) organized by the University of Granada.
- Practical session on preventive early career education (July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021) – organized by the University of Padova
- d) Sharing materials on Arqus Portal for the training of future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors at Arqus faculties of education**

Materials shared on Arqus Portal regard career education programs and actions, which can also be useful for the training of future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors. Arqus partners agree that it is particularly important that future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors benefit from opportunities to participate in specific raining activities that will help them strengthen their students’ skills and resources (e.g., career adaptability, hope, optimism, resilience, career knowledge) by developing specific forms of interventions with all their students — with and without disabilities — in inclusive educational settings. For example, the Larios laboratory at the University of Padova planned and implemented the training program ‘Path for building a portfolio of skills useful for career choice in an inclusive perspective’ for elementary, middle and high school teachers. The training program, which consists of ten sessions for a total of 40 hours, aims to train teachers to develop their skills to carry out career education and career coaching interventions in an inclusive perspective in their school settings.

## **Conclusions**

As final result of the project experience, Arqus partners have acquired new and greater awareness of the essential role of preventive career education for the positive development of human being and for the design of equal and inclusive educational contexts. A lot of work still needs to be done, starting from the promotion and implementation of training programs for future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors.

It is hoped that shared good practices and tools will provide a common starting point for the creation of specific training programs at the participating universities and thus for their respective cultural and educational contexts.

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