Report on the Roundabout Method Implementation

CGC - Roundabouts for Digital Transformation (CGC–DigiTrans) - Professional Guidance & Counselling (CGC) in Multi-Actor-Networks

Authors:

Lea Ferrari & Teresa Maria Sgaramella

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CGC-DigiTrans partners´ Contributors:

Vida Drąsutė, Edita Rudminaitė (Public Institution "eMundus")

Jan Woldendorp, Annemarie van der Wees, Cora van Triest, Dennis Trotta (Saxion University of Applied Sciences)

Martin Stark, Filiz Keser Aschenberger (The University for Continuing Education Krems)

Lea Ferrari, Teresa Maria Sgaramella, Francesca Zuanetti (University of Padua)

Peter Weber, Bettina Siecke, Jenny Schulz (University of Applied Labour Studies).

1 The work package 3

The WP3 links the development of the Roundabout method for CGC to support the digital transformation and tush, especially overcoming the digital divide for disadvantaged workers while aiding the digital transformation of the economy. At the same time links the practical application of the method to the HE curriculum to be developed in WP4 by creating insides and practice examples (1). These examples are gathered through the evaluation process, which has the dual purpose of improving the method for praxis and to be instructive for current and future practitioners (2).

For these two main aims of the WP3, results will be described highlighting the contribution of each partner.

2 Results about the practitioners' involvement and general picture of the roundabout methodology implementation

The Roundabout pilots consist of real-life CGC involving Labour market actors and solving real problems encountered in the process of digital transformation. The concrete implementation not only depends on the way the method has been developed in interaction with CGC experts in WP1 it has been responsive to the actual problems encountered "on the ground" by the several practitioners involved in the implementation.

The attention to the local situation has allowed us to test the implementation of the roundabout methodology in different settings, with diverse counselors and clients, generating an appreciable number of case studies. These case studies mirror the heterogeneity of client situations and value the need to continue working to support practitioners as well as their clients in coping with digital transformation.

2.1 Roundabout piloting implementation in ITALY: the general picture

In Italy, five counselors started the implementation of the roundabout for a total of 7 case studies. Four counselors work in the North of Italy, CM, AR, and PZ in the Veneto Region, and ST in the Emilia Romagna Region. One counselor, RZ works in Sicily, in the South of Italy. ST works in the career service at the University of Bologna, CM, AR, PZ, are freelance and collaborate with VET and Regional employment services while RZ is a psychologist, career counsellor, and researcher at the University of Enna Kore in Italy. ST started to work with a nontraditional student who was attending the university and was reconsidering her career. Unfortunately, the young woman found a job after the first two meetings and left the program.

CM worked with Stefano, a 22-year-old man who dreams of becoming a cartoonist. In collaboration with a VET institution, he started the roundabout career counseling and a 3D Unreal Creation. Unfortunately, after the end of the course, he didn't continue career counseling.

AR worked with a 54-year-old woman who, after obtaining a PhD, worked as a young researcher at the university until, at age 40, she started working as a high school teacher. She wishes to explore new job opportunities. The counselor started the roundabout process, but at the third meeting, the client decided, despite the counselor's tentative efforts, that she was not interested in digital skills and did not want to move forward with the roundabout.

PZ worked with two clients. The first one, Valentina, is a 49-year-old woman who worked for twenty-four years as a dental assistant in a dental clinic in her local area. The owner left the clinic due to a serious health issue, passing it on to his partner. The new owner first closed the practice, dismissing all employees, and then reopened it under a new name. The client was offered a contract with a much lower salary than she had before her dismissal, which she did not accept, entering unemployment. The client sought other job opportunities as a dental assistant, but due to her complete lack of digital skills, she left two dental clinics after only a few days of work, where she had agreed to trial periods. The second one, Alessandra, is a 46-year-old woman who worked as a secretary at a real estate agency and an architect's office and as a ticket clerk at a public transportation company until 2014. Later, with the birth of her seven-year-old twins, she took the opportunity of a job as a cafeteria worker in a catering company in her area, a job that allowed her to balance family management with work. She is now looking for a job and receiving public unemployment benefits.

RZ worked with two clients. The first client, AA, is 34 and is working as a posturologist in her studio. She asked for counseling because she would like to become a teacher. The second client, CG, is a 23-year-old young woman with a high school diploma in human sciences and a university student in psychology. She approached the university counselor because she needed to prepare her thesis. During the counseling, she declared she has no digital skills, and it is very difficult for her to work on the thesis.

2.2 Roundabout piloting implementation in GERMANY: the general picture

The German partner involved two practitioners for a total of two cases.

One counselor is employed at a private continuing education institution. While this institution offers various training programs, the counseling service is free of charge and outcome-neutral, ensuring that clients receive independent guidance tailored to their needs. The client involved is Albert (pseudonymized), a 53-year-old man who holds a secondary school qualification and has completed training as a bakery sales assistant. He is currently unemployed and looking for work. He is married. The counseling focuses on improving his digital skills, which are currently very limited.

The other counselor works within a network for continuing education, providing neutral and free orientation counseling. This service aims to support citizens in planning their professional development and maintaining their employability. Both counseling services operate in an urban environment, focusing on career development and lifelong learning. The involved client is Mrs. Karzem (pseudonymized), an approximately 35-year-old woman who completed her secondary education (equivalent to A-levels) in Iraq. She then dedicated herself to family life. She is a single mother of five children, one of whom is over 18. At present, she is unemployed and seeks guidance on entering the workforce after her time as a full-time parent.

2.3 Roundabout piloting implementation in the NETHERLANDS: the general picture

The partner from the Netherlands involved practitioners who work at the career service of one of the largest labor unions for a total of three cases. For privacy reasons, their names are not revealed. The first case, Naomi is a 55-year-old woman, who migrated from Suriname 30 years ago. She worked for about 2 0years as a cleaning lady in several cleaning companies in domestic and office contracts. She is also an active executive member of the FNV trade union. She is aware of the need for and wishes to develop digital and communication skills. The second case, Robert, is a 51-year-old man who worked for the regional Council for the Environment since he was 23 y.o. In his work, he dealt with the Environmental Act in the field of assessing and granting permits. As legislation has changed, his function has also changed and has become virtually superfluous. Due to the advent of the Environment and Planning Act, he has become redundant. He needs to replan his career

2.4 Roundabout piloting implementation in AUSTRIA: the general picture

Despite the many efforts, conducted in collaboration with the German team, the partner from Austria, didn't receive a positive answer from the Austrian practitioners in testing the roundabout methodology. Several actions were, however, implemented as reported in the Austrian section of the report (see 3.4).

3 Roundabout methodology implementation: national and cross-national analysis

To facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the roundabout methodology and collecting both qualitative and quantitative observations a specific tool was developed by the It partner.

The *'NAVIGATING THE ROUNDABOUT. Experiencing sharing form'* includes three main sections: (1) The background section, to collect data on the clients and the stakeholders involved; (2) the roundabout process section, which asks questions on the six phases of the roundabout methodology; (3) the final evaluation section, to collect feedback from the counselors on the roundabout implementation. The form was provided to each counselor in paper and pencil and also in digital form, developed by the LT partner, to facilitate the recording of the information on the roundabout methodology.

To gain a detailed and clear understanding of the implementation of the roundabout methodology, a two-step methodology was used. In the first step, the IT partner, based on *the NAVIGATING THE ROUNDABOUT Experiencing sharing form*, developed a grid for the partners to summarize their cases. This work allows us to obtain a national picture of the implementation of this new methodology. In the second step, the IT partner conducted a comprehensive analysis of strengths and weaknesses emerging across countries.

In the following pages the results obtained at national level are presented.

3.1 Roundabout implementation: ITALIAN national evaluation

PART 1: The general information

- **The Italian Context**

The Italian labor market. The Italian labor market is characterized by strong regional diversity, with industrial activity concentrated in the north and the agricultural and tourism sectors more developed in the south. The main economic sectors are services, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. The unemployment rate is around 8%. Forecasts for the period 2023-2027 indicate an employment need of about 3.8 million people, with the service sector absorbing about 75% of the demand. A strong emphasis on digital skills is expected. It is estimated that between 875,000 and 959,000 positions will require a mix of at least two e-skills, representing over 20% of the total new hires. These skills include basic digital abilities, capacity to use mathematical and IT languages and methods, and management of innovative solutions.

Investments from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) are expected to generate about 70% of new jobs in four main sectors: construction and infrastructure, tourism and commerce, advanced services, education, and culture. Forty percent of the funds will be allocated to Southern Italy to reduce regional disparities. The most in-demand professions will be related to sectors involved in NRRP investments, such as engineers, healthcare technicians, ICT specialists, and qualified professionals in health and social services. An increase in permanent and fixed-term contracts is expected, while collaboration and self-employment contracts will decrease.

The ecological and digital transition will be fundamental for economic recovery. The NRRP allocates 37% of investments to climate objectives and 20% to digital transition. This will lead to a greater demand for "green jobs" in sectors such as circular economy, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and environmental protection. The most difficult professions to find include doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, mathematics and computer science specialists, ICT technicians, and engineers.

Sectors with the greatest job opportunities include mechatronics, metallurgy, agri-food, fashion, and construction. The service sector, particularly tourism and commerce, offers numerous opportunities. Finally, the demand for immigrant workers remains high, with 91,000 entries expected in May 2023, equal to 19.5% of the total. Foreign workers are particularly in demand in operational services, transport, logistics, construction, and the food industry.

The education and training sector is facing significant challenges in meeting this growing demand for digital skills. It is expected that the current training offer can only meet 60% of the potential demand in the next 5 years, with particularly critical shortages in STEM disciplines.

References

https://eures.europa.eu/living-and-working/labour-market-information-europe/labour-market-information-italy_en (retrived on internet on February 2025)

- **Work Context of the counselors' navigators**

After the preparatory course, two counselors decided to take part in piloting the roundabout method. The first counselor works in a private employment center. She took part in the roundabout testing with two clients. The second counselor works for a private provider that receives public funding. She took part in the roundabout testing with two people.

- **General info about the clients**

The first client, AA, is thirty-four and is working as a posturologist in her studio. She asked for counseling because she would like to become a teacher.

The second client, CG, is a 23-year-old young woman with a high school diploma in human sciences and is a university student in psychology. She approached the university counselor because she needed to prepare her thesis. During the counseling she declared she has no digital skills, and it is difficult for her to work on the thesis.

The third client, VA, is a 45-year-old woman, with a secondary school certificate who worked for twenty-six years as a chairside assistant in a dental practice in the area. Now she is unemployed. She is divorced and has an eighteen-year-old son. Her new partner works as a lorry driver.

The fourth client, AL, is a 46-year-old woman who holds a secondary school diploma as a 'Business Management Technician'. She worked as a secretary in an estate agency and an architect's office and as a ticket clerk in a public transport company until 2014. She is married and has twin seven-year-old sons. At the time of consultation, she was unemployed for two months.

- **General info about the employers, gender, professional role, companies, reasons for their involvement**

The counselor did not involve any employer for the first case. For the second case, a thirty-two y.o., a psychologist was involved because he could explain the importance of having digital skills. The counselor was *completely* satisfied.

For the fourth case after a course on accounting and administration was activated to provide her with technical knowledge and an on-line free course on self-publishing course a business designer was involved by the counsellor with the aim of supporting her in starting up a business.

- **General info about the training providers, and activities provided**

The first training provider, involved for the first case AA, focused on teaching basic digital skills for the acquisition of the European Informatics Passport (EIPASS). The counselor was *completely* satisfied with this involvement because it allows students to network with other students and at the same time it guarantees proficient learning.

The second training provider, involved for CG, was the tutor working for university tutor service. A tutor was assigned to CG to support her in using the office suite (word, excel, ppt) and bibliography search platforms such as google scholar. The counselor was *completely* satisfied with this involvement also because this service is free of charge and CG could learn in a friendly and motivating environment.

A third training provider was ENAIP, the institution activating the career counselling process also providing training courses also dealing with digital skills.

PART 2: The Roundabout and its Phases

- **Phase 1 Engagement**

Concerning building a positive relationship with the client, the first counselor, for both her cases, was *completely* satisfied in building a relationship, clarifying concerns, and clarifying responsibility on how to proceed. The second counselor, for both her cases, was *completely* satisfied in building a relationship, clarifying concerns, and clarifying responsibility on how to proceed.

As concerns networking and cooperation actions, as expected, both counselors clarified whether other actors already play a role (e.g. employer or education provider) and whether previous activities have already taken place. In addition, it was clarified if the involvement as partners was possible.

The factors mentioned by the first counselor as relevant for the success of the process include *the motivation to change job in one case (n=1) and to be open to dialogue and emphasise her desire to learn (n=1).* The supporting factors mentioned by the second counselor *case (n=1); to agency and active commitment in searching for a job together with the personal informal network (n=1).*

The barriers mentioned as relevant include *perceiving to be so far behind in the acquisition of digital skills in one case (n=1); difficulty in asking for support because she is ashamed of her poor digital skills (n=1).* The barriers mentioned by the second counselor were mainly related to the first client (client n 3 VA) and dealing with *limited self-efficacy*, both general and specific for the digital skills, and the *psychological discomfort.*

As the evaluation of the engagement phase process description and implementation, both counselors, for both clients, considered the provided description of the engagement process *completely* useful and effective, although the second counselor would have preferred more freedom in the amount of time allowed by the service to completely fulfil the goals.

- **Phase 2 Assessment**

As concern the general satisfaction perceived by the counselors for this phase, the first counselor, for both of her clients, was *completely* satisfied: She declared she was able to clarify the situation with the client, supported the client with question impulses, used knowledge about professions, devoted some time to developing proposals and plan actions, selected procedure appropriate to the client's state of the mind', mentioned current requirement in client's profession, provided guidance on the assessment and also shared the results of the assessment with both clients. The second counsellor, for both of her clients, was *completely* satisfied. In particular, she devoted some time to developing proposals and plan actions, selected qualitative

procedures because she felt they were appropriate to the clients' state of the mind. She mentioned the use of the knowledge about professions and business strategies and innovation.

Concerning the involvement of other partners, one counselor, for her first client, *partially* clarified the digital skills with a partner, since she had to explore the website of the Ministry of Education, and it was not necessary to have direct contact. For her second client, she *completely* clarified the digital skills with a psychologist for plan the internship. The second counselor in one case directly addressed the relevance of the digital skills with the client, while in the second case she involved a professional who clarified the digital skills needed in practice.

Both counselors did not contact any employer.

The factors mentioned as relevant for the success of the process include flexibility to change (n=1); the willingness to change her perception about herself on digital skills (n=1); to create a welcoming climate and a strong working alliance (n=1); employers interest in hiring the person (n=1) and the availability of free courses (n=11).

The barriers mentioned as relevant to the success of the process include: a low sense of self-efficacy in learning digital skills; (n=1); t*he shyness that can barrier the request of support* (n=1); lack of motivation to participate in a training course, and the pressure from the context, lack of searching strategy (n=1).

As concerns the evaluation of the *assessment* phase process description and implementation, both counsellors, for both their clients, considered the provided description of the engagement process *completely* useful and effective. The second counselor introduced a qualitative tool to support VA and AL in developing awareness of their strengths, to identify personal and professional goals.

- **Phase 3 Planning**

Concerning the general satisfaction for the implementation of this phase, the first counselor, for both of her clients, declared that the clients reconstructed the different actions necessary to achieve the goals by getting a clearer picture of the different steps. The second counsellor more specifically explored the various courses available for getting the digital competencies needed in the context where a job was offered or aimed, so to provide a starting point in the process, a need analysis and setting the steps to the goals.

The counsellors as stimulated by the Roundabout were *completely* satisfied as they could collect the client's opinion on what they discussed. They also reported satisfaction because the goals were clear and differentiated in steps and the decisions undertaken were clear. The counsellors, according to the specific starting conditions of the clients, provided support using their own orientation knowledge, knowledge of searching strategies, contacts in their network, available courses in the area or knowledge about funding opportunities. They agreed with their clients on how to proceed.

Concerning the training providers, the first counselor, for her first client, involved education providers to test the feasibility of the objectives and identified some of them. For the second client she contacted the organisation where the internship was supposed to take place. The second counselor activated experts in

the area to support the client in developing an innovative view of the work activity the client was interested into thus inserting the need for digital competencies into a more general meaningful framework.

The factors mentioned as relevant for the success of the process include finding courses that allow to achieve multiple goals such as the acquisition of digital skills and at the same time points for climbing the ranking in public sectors; being self-employed allows more flexibility in balancing course attendance with other duties (n=1); Speed of response and availability of the network involved (n=1); the development of a detailed plan for the project identified (n=1); an active search for public funding (n=1); an interview with a person currently taking a similar position (n=1).

The barriers mentioned as relevant to the success of the process include: One counselor did not find any barrier for one case. For the second case the barriers include the fact that the client lives far away from the stakeholders involved. The second counselor identified a potential barrier just for one of the two clients that consisted mainly in the maintaining high motivation in an active participation.

As the evaluation of the planning phase process description and implementation both counsellors considered the process *completely* useful and effective and didn't introduce changes.

- **Phase 4 Action**

About training measures one counselor, for both of her clients, declared they *completely* participated in further training measures and *always* contacted the stakeholders involved with emails, and with online and in person meetings. The second counselor reported an active participation of the client in both contacting the stakeholders for further information and attending the training.

The first counselor, for both of her clients, *completely* provided supports before the start of training, and provided clarification when requested. The second counselor reported the need to guide the client in developing a strategy to search for opportunities in the context which would ensure a success of the process and concrete benefit from the training provided.

One counselor, for the first client, *partially* cooperated with a training provider: she contacted it to verify the possibility of attending the courses online. For the second client, the counselor *completely* cooperated with the university and the employer for organising the internship. Both stakeholders made themselves available to seek the most satisfactory solutions for the client's needs and cooperated. The second counselor reported *partial* to *a lot of* level of cooperation with training providers who shared information relevant and in one case shared a detailed proposal.

The factors mentioned as relevant for the success of the action phase process include realising that several people, with the same age and even older have similar difficulties (n=1); the worker involved in the network constantly supported the client and updated the counsellor on the activities conducted (n=1); activation of proactive job search by the client (=1).

The barriers mentioned as relevant to the success of the action phase process include: the test for accessing a specific course and difficulties in organising and balancing several duties such as family, study and working life.(n=1); the length of interval before getting the opportunity for an interview (n=1).

As regards the evaluation of the action phase process description and implementation both counsellors considered the provided description of the action phase process *completely* useful and effective. No changes were introduced.

- **Phase 5 Results**

As concern the results achieved by the clients, the first counselor, for both of her clients, asserts that the clients informed her about the result. In the case of the second counselor one client informed her about the results that consisted in a job offer that would provide her with the economic independence to start a self-employed activity; one client shared the decision to attend a course aimed at providing her with the digital competences that emerged from the interview with a professional working in the same area of interest.

As concern the provided supports in this phase, one counselor, for both of her clients, did not provide any further support, documented the results with a short questionnaire on satisfaction and some feedback questions.

The second counselor for both of her clients, did not provide any further support. She documented the results by interviewing the clients on their satisfaction and motivation to autonomously persist in the plan developed together.

As concern the stakeholders involved, the first counselor, for both of her clients, asserts the training provider in one case and the organization that offered the internship documented the results with a certificate of attendance. For the second counselor a certificate for the training attended was provided only in one case.

The factors mentioned as relevant for the success of the results phase process include: the successes achieved and enthusiastic about skills acquired (n=1), the improvement of self-confidence (n=2); the awareness of personal strength developed (1).

One counselor did not find any barriers. Self-efficacy was a potential barrier according to the second counselor: her clients showed a vulnerability to a limited self-efficacy and psychological distress when faced with unexpected obstacles.

As regards the evaluation of the results phase process description and implementation both counselors considered the description of the action phase process provided as *completely* useful and effective. No changes were introduced.

- **Phase 6 Evaluation**

As concern the final step of the Roundabout, the first counselor asserts both of her clients contributed with their perspective on counselling process and results taking initiatives and engagement. The second counselor asserts both of her clients contributed with their perspective on counselling process and results, by taking initiatives in one case and showing engagement in the second case. The two counselors reported they

systematically and *always* guided the reflection and gave voice to the clients and changes in their priorities. The modalities of actions characterizing the two counselors did not lead to involving other cooperation partners.

In this phase specific success factors and barriers were not mentioned. As the evaluation of the evaluation phase process description and implementation: The first counselor, for both of their clients, considered the provided description of the evaluation phase process *completely* useful and effective. The second counsellor found the description of the phase effective although a potential limit in the effectiveness comes for the time limits when the length of the action is not personalized.

PART 3. Summarizing the experience

- **Summary of comments provided by the counselors on their experience with the Roundabout**

3.1.1. *The strengths and weaknesses* of the roundabout for the diverse phases for the first counselor are *t*he crucial moments of the roundabout were the planning and implementation of the objectives. Planning long-term action plans where not all variables are easily controllable is often difficult. The strength of the roundabout is to support, by acting as a guide, client, and counsellor in carefully selecting and reflecting on all steps of the process. The greatest strength of the roundabout is that it provides both counsellors and clients with a clear indication of the different steps to follow and not to overlook. For the second counsleor the strengths are in the possibility of developing ideas and stimuli useful to develop insights regarding knowledge of the occupations of interest and the need to understand the importance of acquiring and developing one's own digital skills

3.1.2. *The crucial moments/turning* points for the first counselor were those of planning and networking. The network was one of the elements that helped the process most. On the one hand, the network provided digital skills by accompanying G. step by step and providing the practical side of using them, and on the other hand, it supported G. emotionally and created a supportive environment in which she felt comfortable. The second counselor mentions the openness of the training bodies' representatives when deepening knowledge about the professions and in the implementation of their own professional. The training course coordinator of the home institution supporting the client in finding courses aimed at developing certain digital skills of the client and in providing a course on technical competences within the accounting domain.

3.1.3. About the aspects and choices, they are thinking of bringing into their professional practice, the first counselor mentions 'reflection on the current and increasingly frequent need for clients to be supported in the process of acquiring new digital skills. Such acquisition should not be taken for granted and needs to be continuously updated. It can be effective in the number of alternatives that can be screened in consulting processes, ensuring that the client has more and better opportunities for life and work. Certainly, one of the aspects to bring to my practice is to thoroughly analyse each step in the counselling process by reflecting on success factors or barriers and contextual factors.' The second counselor mention *the use of the information on portals for the definition of both technical and digital skills to explore with the customs.*

3.1.4. About *the elements from the Roundabout suggested as relevant to introduce in a Training Course* for future CGC professionals, the first counselor reports 'I think it might be useful, given the speed of change and the increasing number of digital skills required in the world of work, to propose a specific little roundabout for future CGC professionals who need support to implement their digital skills. Another important aspect is cooperation with a network of various other professionals. Future CGC professionals could be supported in the implementation of strategies to involve different actors who can support the client and respond to their diverse needs. I would introduce a specific area dedicated to the acquisition of networking skills.' The second counselor reports reflections on clients' psychological functioning. The lower the psychological functioning of the clients, the lower the personal resources to cope with work transition issues.

3.1.5. Additional elements to consider, and relevant to keep in mind include, for the first counselor, handy to have a grid for evaluating the process so that counsellors can schematically and easily display strengths and weaknesses thus providing for shifting attention to more effective choices during the process or improving their actions in the future. In addition, the possibility of having a structured final evaluation of the process. Tthe second counselor reports that the strengths are in the possibility of developing ideas and stimuli useful to develop insights regarding knowledge of the occupations of interest and the need to understand the importance of acquiring and developing one's own digital skills. Active moments of discussion in teams where the actors are involved in the guidance process, particularly mental health professionals. This will help reflecting in a complex way on the clients' mental resources and define intervention methods adapted to their personal resources and the reasons underlying their transition problems at work level.

- **Summary comments and suggestions from the Italian national team**

Strengths

The counsellors have no doubts that the manual and materials provided illustrating the different stages of the roundabout are clear and effective. They were able to follow the methodology to the best of their ability and achieve satisfactory results. The articulation and organisation of the process into different phases is undoubtedly a strength of the methodology as is the breadth of the working tools.

The methodology was also appreciated for the flexibility it allows in terms of adaptability of the process to the specific needs of each client. Thus, the dynamism of entry into the process contributes to tailor-made pathways.

Not least, the explicit quest to involve contexts contributes to creating new contacts and developing meaningful networking for both the clients and the professionals and stakeholders involved. The networking that the project brings about enables the various participants to circulate knowledge of the needs and answers available and needed, thus enhancing the likelihood of new activations.

Opportunities

For the counsellors, there is the advantage of innovating their professionalism and expanding their knowledge of the territory in terms of both services and organisations, expanding the possibility of networking and influencing different contexts.

For clients, the possibility of developing greater awareness of their own resources and their own ability to change by developing self-confidence is also useful in other situations and contexts. The development of professional readiness is pursued and contributes to the knowledge and use of existing resources in the area, of which one might have limited knowledge. This helps to increase the perceived quality of life.

Overall, it seems fair to say that the roundabout produces results that could be characterised in terms of sustainability, above all social and probably also economic. Indeed, the suggested impact translates into improvements in both the social networks and quality of life of clients, advisors and stakeholders, as well as their productivity levels.

Challenges

The biggest challenge for the counsellor concerns awareness-raising in different contexts. It is not only about involvement in counselling sessions. It seems crucial that the counsellor, before involving the stakeholder in the counselling session, works to create the conditions for the interaction to be effective and genuinely supportive. This also applies to the subsequent phases, especially the action phase, in which the counsellor creates by working with the stakeholders that support network necessary for the client to experience success in the training or professional path undertaken. Scaffolding actions are thus directed at both the client and the stakeholders.

As far as the client in particular is concerned, the initial phase of building a working alliance with the client and continually sharing the path and the steps to be taken is fundamental. Since we are dealing with potentially fragile clients for various reasons, supporting successes with the use of customised feedback is primary.

Barriers

The barriers identified can be described by considering clients, contexts, and counselling.

As far as clients are concerned, there are psychological barriers associated primarily with recognising and becoming aware of one's digital skills, and thus availability to change. Relevant appear to be efficacy beliefs and coping skills in complex situations including managing contextual pressures and developing work life balance skills. Also not to be forgotten are skills associated with career management such as the ability to search for a job.

At the level of contexts, it emerges that they do not always respond in a timely and appropriate manner to the demands of counsellors and clients. Resistance to collaboration hinders the pursuit of objectives.

Regarding the counselling and the methodology, itself, a critical issue detected is the conflict with the rigid procedures of the services which often pose constraints and tight deadlines.

- **Suggestions for improving the Roundabout method**

Integrate in the visual representation of the Roundabout possible entries and connections with other goals and competencies relevant for the counseling and guidance process.

As far as the counsellor is concerned, offer the counsellor a diary-type tool to monitor his/her professional development and offer reflection on his/her digital skills.

As for the client, especially in the presence of clients with high levels of complexity, special attention should be paid to providing continuous support for the client's motivation and efficacy beliefs. The use of positive reinforcement and positive role models appears particularly significant.

Keep in mind that e-skills development is not isolated and must be integrated with overall client development. For instance, it may be necessary to promote other skills associated with professional development such as job search skills (e.g. writing a cv, how to take a job interview). At the same time, it may be necessary to network with other professionals such as in the case of poor coping skills in the face of family pressures.

3.2 Roundabout implementation: GERMAN national evaluation

PART 1: The general information

- **National Work Context: Labor Market in Germany**

The labor market in Germany is very heterogeneous and varies greatly between different regions.

The German economy stagnated in 2024. This was reflected in a 0.2% fall in gross domestic product. The economic situation had an impact on the German labor market with an increase in the number of unemployed and underemployed (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2025a, p. 7). At the same time, employment and employment subject to social insurance contributions rose slightly in 2024.

The annual average unemployment rate based on the total civilian labor force was 6% in 2024 (+ 0.3 percentage points compared to 2023). The lowest annual average unemployment rate compared to all German federal states in 2024 was in southern Germany (Bavaria 3.7%; Baden-Württemberg 4.2%). The city-states of Bremen (11.1%), Berlin (9.7%), and Hamburg (8.0%) recorded the highest unemployment rates in 2024 compared to all German federal states (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2025a, p. 53).

Germany has a dual training system. Dual training takes place at two places of learning, the company and the school, and lasts between two and three years depending on the training occupation. The company and the trainee conclude a training contract. During the training program, the trainee is taught the necessary skills and qualifications (Kultusministerkonferenz, n.d.).

The German pilot case "Albert" shows a client from southern Germany who is reorienting himself professionally after several years of work experience in his dual vocational training as a bakery salesman. To do this, he acquires digital skills in a further training program.

In 2025, training in Albert's profession will be correctly labeled as training as a specialist salesperson - the food trade (bakery).

.The apprenticeship lasts three years. Activities include the sale, display, and presentation of bread rolls and baked goods. Specialist sales assistants - food trade (bakery) advise customers on products and ingredients. They also prepare small snacks and dishes. They work in bakeries and retail outlets (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2024).

The German pilot case "Mrs. Kazem" shows a client from southern Germany who, after completing a foreign school leaving certificate (A-levels/Abitur in Iraq), has taken time out to look after her children. She seeks counselling because she would like to work as a school companion and an employer has expressed a concrete interest in employing her.

Access to the job of a school companion is not regulated in Germany. It is a professional employment opportunity. Many employers expect a pedagogical qualification (e.g. as an educator) (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2025c), but access without a completed qualification is also possible if suitable. School companions support pupils with disabilities, particularly in attending school and participating in school life. They liaise

closely with educational and therapeutic staff, supervise and support the child during the school day, and provide assistance (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2025b).

- **Work Context of the counselors' navigators**

The counselors piloting the Roundabout are located in Southern Germany. The counselors (navigators) work in different institutional contexts within the field of continuing education. One counselor is employed at a private continuing education institution. While this institution offers various training programs, the counseling service itself is free of charge and outcome-neutral, ensuring that clients receive independent guidance tailored to their needs.

The other counselor works within a network for continuing education, providing neutral and free orientation counseling. This service aims to support citizens in planning their professional development and maintaining their employability. Both counseling services operate in an urban environment, focusing on career development and lifelong learning.

- **General info about the clients**

The clients come from different educational and professional backgrounds and seek counselling for various reasons.

Client1: Albert (pseudonymized), 53 years old, male, holds a secondary school qualification and has completed training as a bakery sales assistant. He is currently unemployed and looking for work. He is married. The counseling focuses on improving his digital skills, which are currently very limited.

Client 2 Mrs. Karzem (pseudonymized), approximately 35 years old, female, completed her secondary education (equivalent to A-levels) in Iraq. She then dedicated herself to family life. She is a single mother of five children, one of whom is over 18. At present, she is unemployed and seeks guidance on entering the workforce after her time as a full-time parent.

- **General info about the employers, gender, professional role, companies, reasons for their involvement**

The involvement of employers in the counseling process varied between cases. While no employer was engaged in Albert's case, direct communication with a potential employer played a key role in Mrs. Karzem's counseling process.

Employer 1 (Case: Albert)

No information was provided.

Employer 2 (Case: Mrs Karzem)

Mrs. E., the head of school escort coordination in the municipality, was involved in the counseling process. She was consulted by both the counselor and the client to determine whether a position was available and to clarify whether, in addition to the required training as a school escort, office skills would also be necessary.

On a 5-point Likert scale, the involvement of the employer was rated as very helpful at the end of the process. The counselor explained that this direct exchange made it possible to precisely identify the employer's requirements and provide targeted guidance.

- **General info about the training providers, and activities provided**

The involvement of training providers played an important role in both cases, though their impact on the counseling process varied.

In Albert's case, the selected training provider (pseudonym: ABX) offered a low-threshold introduction to digital skills. This provider was chosen because the course was easily accessible, available on short notice, and offered both in-person and online options. Additionally, having a contact person on-site provided further support. On a 5-point Likert scale, the inclusion of this provider was rated as partially helpful. The client felt more secure knowing what to expect, including details about the number of participants, their prior knowledge, and the course curriculum. Having a designated contact person also contributed to his confidence in taking the course.

In Mrs. Karzem's case, the selected training provider (pseudonym: Training Provider A) specialized in office skills training. This provider was chosen because it was easily accessible for Mrs Karzem and offered part-time, in-person courses, making participation manageable given her circumstances. On a 5-point Likert scale, the involvement of this provider was rated as very helpful. The provider's expertise in this type of training ensured that the content was highly relevant and well-suited to Mrs Karzem's needs.

PART 2: The Roundabout and its Phases

- **Phase 1 Engagement**

The counseling process was assessed based on three key aspects: establishing a transparent and secure relationship, addressing concerns, and clarifying responsibilities for the next steps. The evaluation was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely).

In one case, the counselor rated all three aspects with a score of 4 (very successful). A trusting relationship was established, concerns were largely addressed, and responsibilities for the next steps were clarified, leading to an implicit agreement on how to proceed.

In the other case, the counselor rated all three aspects with a score of 5 (completely successful). The process was perceived as fully transparent and secure, all concerns were resolved, and the client had a clear understanding of their next steps, with an implicit agreement on further actions.

These results indicate a strong foundation of trust and clarity in both cases, with particularly high success in the second case.

As part of the counseling process, the involvement of other actors (e.g. employers or education providers) and previous activities were assessed. Additionally, the potential for these actors to serve as cooperation partners was explored. The evaluation was based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely).

In one case, both aspects were rated 4 (very successful). The counselor clarified whether other actors were already involved and identified previous activities. Furthermore, the possibility of involving these actors as cooperation partners was explored to a large extent.

In the other case, both aspects received the highest rating of 5 (completely successful). The counselor fully clarified the role of existing actors and past activities and successfully assessed their potential involvement as cooperation partners.

These results indicate a high level of success in integrating relevant stakeholders into the counseling process, with particularly strong outcomes in the second case.

Several factors were identified as crucial for the success of the counseling process in its first phase. According to Counsellor 1, key success factors included low-threshold, modular training with small learning units ("nuggets"), enabling clients to experience gradual progress. The availability of technical equipment was also essential. Additionally, fostering courage and motivation, especially when clients were in learning environments with younger participants, contributed to positive outcomes. Counselor 2 emphasized the importance of promoting a positive attitude towards digital tools, helping clients overcome reservations and engage more confidently with technology.

The counselors identified several potential barriers that could impact the success of the counseling process. Counselor 1 highlighted f*ear and pressure as key challenges*. Clients may experience anxiety about new learning content or feel overwhelmed by expectations, which could hinder their engagement and progress. Counselor 2 pointed out that a *lack of necessary hardware at home* might be a barrier, preventing clients from practicing newly acquired digital skills outside of training sessions.

The counselors evaluated the process description regarding its usefulness and effectiveness, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). Counsellor 1 rated the process description as *partially useful (3)*. They found it valuable as it encouraged them to reflect on their role, professional stance, and approach to supporting clients in bridging the digital divide. No modifications or additions were reported. Counsellor 2 rated the process description as *very useful (4)*. They noted that *clarifying open questions* was revealed as a beneficial addition to the process.

- **Phase 2 Assessment**

The counseling process was assessed based on several key aspects, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). The results varied between the two counselors.

Clarification of the Client's Situation: Counsellor 1 rated this aspect as 3 (partially), indicating that the situation was somewhat clarified. Counsellor 2 rated it as 5 (completely), suggesting a thorough clarification.

Support Through Question Impulses. Counsellor 1 rated this as 4 (very), indicating strong support through questioning techniques. Counsellor 2 rated it as 5 (completely), showing full use of this method.

Use of knowledge about professions: Counsellor 1 rated this as 3 (partially), suggesting moderate use of knowledge about professions. Counsellor 2 rated it as 5 (completely), indicating extensive application.

Time Spent on Proposals and Action Planning: Counsellor 1 rated this as 3 (partially), indicating some time was allocated. Counsellor 2 rated it as 1 (not at all), suggesting no time was devoted to this aspect.

Appropriateness of Procedures to the Client's State of Mind: Counsellor 1 rated this as 4 (very), indicating a strong alignment. Counsellor 2 rated it as 5 (completely), suggesting a perfect match.

Description of Current Professional Requirements of the client: Counsellor 1 rated this as 3 (partially), indicating some mention of professional requirements. Counsellor 2 rated it as 5 (completely), showing full inclusion of this aspect.

Support in Reflection on Self-Assessment Procedures and Outcomes: Counsellor 1 rated this as 4 (very), indicating significant support. Counsellor 2 rated it as 5 (completely), showing full guidance in this area.

Both counselors confirmed that they shared the results from the assessment of needs with their clients.

Counselor 1 indicated that they partially involved cooperation partners to clarify digital requirements in the contract. Counselor 2 stated that they were very involved in this process.

Counselor 1 did not provide any information regarding the involvement of the employer in working on requirements. Counselor 2 reported that they fully involved the employer in this process. Counselor 1 indicated that they partially used databases to identify competence requirements. Counselor 2 reported that they did not use databases at all for this purpose. The question of cooperating with providers of competence self-assessments cannot be answered due to missing data.

As concern factors relevant for success, Counsellor 1 highlighted that taking a slow, step-by-step approach, and meeting the person where they are in their process, is important for the success of the process. Counselor 2 mentioned that explaining to clients the purpose of the competence assessments makes it easier for them to engage and participate actively.

For the barriers, Counselor 1 identified that trust needs to be built and that a respectful approach is important to solve barriers to the success of the process. Counselor 2 mentioned that a potential barrier could be not being able to establish a connection with the client.

On the effectiveness, Counsellor 1 found the provided process description partially useful and effective, while Counsellor 2 rated it as very useful and effective.

Neither counselor provided any information about additions or modifications to the process.

- **Phase 3 Planning**

As regards steps in goals implementation, Counselor 1 stated the goal that the client reviewed training opportunities based on the identified requirements and established contact accordingly. Counselor 2 did not provide any information on this question.

Both counselors indicated that they partially collected client opinions on the discussions, the roundabout framework, and the conditions. Counselor 1 noted that the client was initially difficult to grasp, requiring patience, but in the end it was optimal while counselor 2 mentioned that time constraints limited the extent to which client opinions could be gathered.

Counsellor 1 stated that the goals were partially clear and differentiated in steps, while Counsellor 2 confirmed that they were clear, but did not provide details on the extent of differentiation.

Regarding the clarity of decisions to undertake, both counselors rated this aspect as very clear.

Both counselors confirmed that they provided support using orientation knowledge, search strategies, and relevant contacts. Counselor 1 elaborated that they identified solutions and strategies to improve digital skills, including home and training provider equipment, clarified the client's training preferences, highlighted differences between training providers, introduced funding mechanisms, and provided relevant websites. Counselor 2 stated that they searched for and successfully found a funding provider and a training provider for the client. Additionally, both counselors confirmed that they agreed on how to proceed. Counselor 1 established a follow-up plan with task distribution, while Counsellor 2 agreed that the client would reach out again.

Involving education providers to test the feasibility of the objectives and that suitable provider had already been identified was necessary. While Counselor 1 identified fully online and hybrid options, as well as the possibility of attending training on-site, Counselor 2 identified a nearby provider offering part-time and in-person training.

As regards success factors Counselor 1 identified the following success factors: considering the phases outlined in the handbook and being willing to follow an iterative process. Counselor 2 highlighted that knowledge of professions, and the labor market is advantageous for the success of the process.

As regards barriers to the success Counselor 1 mentioned the fear of digitalization and insufficient digital equipment while Counselor 2 noted that in-person counseling was necessary, as conducting the process by phone or virtually would have been challenging.

Both counselors confirmed that the provided process description was very useful and effective.

- **Phase 4 Action**

Both counselors confirmed that the client actively participated in further training measures to a high degree.

Regarding contacting the counselor, the company, or the training provider when needed, both counselors stated that the client did so occasionally.

Counselor 1 stated that they partially supported the steps necessary before the start of further training, such as highlighting visions and goals. Counselor 2 did not provide support for these steps.

Regarding the training process, Counsellor 1 provided partial clarification and support, by pointing out various offers from different training providers.

Counselor 2 provided strong clarification and support by offering assistance to the client, but the client declined and was able to resolve everything independently.

Cooperation with employers and training providers was described as partial by Counselor 1, gathering information on different training content and conditions to provide the client with a positive vision. Counselor 2 reported that they fully (4) cooperated, specifically by reviewing the job description with the

client. Regarding the support from cooperation partners in implementing the measure, both counselors confirmed that the partners provided strong (4) support. Counselor 1 noted that the training providers gave detailed information on curricula, conditions, and funding opportunities, and addressed the client's fears. Counselor 2 highlighted that the training provider knew the client's goals and was able to tailor the training accordingly.

As regards success factors Counselor 1 identified support throughout the process phases, with clear goals, as a relevant factor for the success of the process. Counselor 2 emphasized the client's willingness as a key factor for success.

As potential barriers, Counselor 1 identified that if the client is not sufficiently empowered, it could fail to engage in further training while Counselor 2 mentioned that a lack of willingness or recognition of the need could be a barrier to the success of the process.

Both counselors confirmed that the provided process description was extremely useful and effective. Neither counselor provided any information regarding adding or modifying anything.

- **Phase 5 Results**

Moving to results, Counselor 1 stated that the client sometimes informed them about the results, expressing surprise at the rapid progress they were making with digital skills. According to counselor 2 mentioned that the client frequently informed them, sharing how well they were managing and the learning progress they were making.

Regarding further steps, Counsellor 1 confirmed that the client undertook further actions, specifically by enrolling in an additional module. Counsellor 2 stated that the client did not undertake further steps, as it was not necessary.

When it comes to further interest and need for support, Counsellor 1 shared that the client did not express any further interest, as they were now proceeding independently. Counselor 2 mentioned that the client formulated further interest and expressed the desire for continued contact, feeling secure in their progress.

Both Counsellors confirmed that they *documented* the results/outcomes. Counselor 1 confirmed that the cooperation partners documented the results, for example, by providing a certificate for the training. Counselor 2 stated that no documentation was provided by the cooperation partners as it was not necessary.

As regards success factors, Counsellor 1 emphasized the importance of taking sufficient time to assess the client's needs and meeting them at their current stage in the process. Counsellor 2 highlighted that the client's willingness and understanding of the purpose of learning are crucial factors for success.

As regards barriers, Counsellor 1 identified time pressure as a potential barrier to the success of the CC process. Counsellor 2 pointed out that difficulties in establishing a connection with the client could hinder the process.

Both counsellors found the provided process description to be especially useful and effective. Neither of them indicated any modifications or additions.

- **Phase 6 Evaluation**

In this phase both counsellors confirmed that the client contributed their perspective to the counseling process and results. Counsellor 1 noted that the client's significant fears were incorporated into the counseling approach. Counsellor 2 mentioned that the client now has the opportunity to pursue further training as a school support assistant.

Counsellor 2 frequently guided evaluation and reflection, while Counsellor 1 did not provide information on this aspect.

Regarding openness to suggestions, wishes, and criticism, Counsellor 2 stated they were always open, emphasizing the importance of listening to clients and being receptive to criticism to improve the counseling process. Counsellor 1 did not provide any information on this question.

In terms of sharing relevant findings or experiences beyond the individual case with cooperation partners, Counsellor 2 indicated that this was not necessary in this specific case, while Counsellor 1 did not provide any information.

Neither Counsellor 1 nor Counsellor 2 included other cooperation partners in the evaluation. Counsellor 2 clarified that this was not necessary in this particular case.

As regards success factors, Counsellor 1 identified time, preparation, follow-up, and knowledge as key factors for the success of the process. Counsellor 2 emphasized the importance of a well-conducted initial conversation to assess the current situation and determine the direction moving forward.

As regards barriers, Counsellor 1 identified time pressure and a lack of empowerment for the client as potential barriers to the success of the CC process. Counsellor 2 pointed out that, in some cases, in-person counselling is essential.

Both counsellors found the provided process description to be very useful and effective. Neither of the counsellors provided any information regarding adding or modifying something.

3.3 Roundabout implementation: DUTCH national evaluation

PART 1: The general information

National Work Context

The Dutch Career Guidance System and Education Funding is a framework designed to support individuals in making informed decisions about education and careers. By emphasizing lifelong learning and adaptability to labour market changes, it involves schools, government, private entities, and lifelong learning centers. Central to this system is accessible education funding, enabling people to invest in their development.

Career Guidance: Structure and Stakeholders

- **Educational Institutions**

Career guidance begins in schools, where students explore career options early. In secondary education (VMBO and MBO), career orientation and guidance (LOB) are mandatory. Higher education institutions (HBO and universities) provide services like internships, job fairs, and coaching to prepare students for the workforce.

- **Government and Public Sector**

The Dutch government is pivotal in shaping policy and funding programs. Public organizations like the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV) provide career support for job seekers. Also, the larger labour unions like FNV and CNV offer career guidance for workers and unemployed. Digital platforms, such as Werk.nl, offer job listings and career advice, empowering individuals to take charge of their career paths.

- **Private Sector and Advisory Services**

Private career coaches and recruitment agencies supplement public services by offering tailored support, including resume building, interview preparation, and personalized development plans. A wide range of – often self-employed – career coaches and advisors offer a wide range of services. These services cater to a wide audience, from recent graduates to experienced professionals.

- **Lifelong Learning Centers**

These centers address the need for ongoing skill development, offering certifications and vocational training aligned with labour market demands. Programs often focus on in-demand skills like IT, healthcare, and languages.

Education funding in the Netherlands

Accessible education funding is a cornerstone of the Dutch system, ensuring that individuals can pursue education and training at any stage of life. Key mechanisms include:

1. *Lifelong Learning Credit*

This low-interest loan is available to individuals under 56 for accredited programs, covering tuition fees. (Source: duo.nl)

2. *Tax Benefits and Employer Support*

Although direct tax deductions for education costs ended in 2022, employers can provide tax-free reimbursements for training through the Work-Related Costs Scheme (WKR).

3.S*ectoral Training Funds*

Industry-specific training funds, financed through collective labour agreements, offer free or subsidized courses relevant to specific sectors.

4.*Training Vouchers*

These vouchers target groups such as older workers or individuals with disabilities, covering education costs to enhance employability.

5.*Transition budget*

An employee can receive a transition payment if the employer terminates the employment contract or if the employee's temporary contract expires and is not renewed.

- **Challenges and Opportunities**

While the Dutch system is robust, challenges include ensuring equitable access to funding and simplifying complex mechanisms. Ongoing investments and collaborations between government, employers, and educational institutions are needed to address these gaps and promote inclusive opportunities.

- **Conclusion**

The Dutch career guidance system, combined with accessible education funding, supports individuals throughout their career journeys. By promoting lifelong learning and providing diverse financial incentives, the Netherlands aim to maintain a resilient, adaptable workforce ready to meet the demands of a dynamic labour market.

- **Pilot cases**

The first Dutch pilot case "Naomi" shows a client from Surinam origin, living and working in the Amsterdam region in the Netherlands. She is reorienting herself on her career. She has worked for several years now in the cleaning industry and is active in the union. In Suriname, she completed practical healthcare training, but this qualification does not provide much value in the Netherlands. As a result, she often finds herself in unskilled positions. Reflecting on her union work, Naomi has identified the need to further develop her digital competences, particularly in areas such as social media and communication. She recognizes that enhancing her digital skills is crucial to advancing in both her union role and potential future career paths.

The second Dutch pilot case "Robert J. " shows a client from the centre part of the Netherlands. He works at a regional Council for the Environment in a policy position. In his work, he dealt with the Environmental Act in the field of assessing and granting permits. As legislation has changed, his function has also changed and has become redundant. He has received a lot of education, but it is very much focused on a very specific field. This makes it more difficult to deploy in other areas. He knows everything about that one specific Environmental Act, but outside of that he lacks the necessary competences. Due to his redundancy, he is

forced to orientate on other fields of work. He is desperate for support to reconsider his future and does not have a clear view on the steps he needs to take. Due to his specialist training, he has a considerable backlog in working with new software and applications that lie outside his specialism.

- **Work Context of the counselors' navigators**

The counselors piloting the Roundabout are located in the centre part of The Netherlands in the Utrecht area. They work for the career service of one of the large labour Unions in The Netherlands. The choice to do the piloting within the career service of the labour union is because they are already familiar with a multi stakeholder approach to career coaching. The union works for individual clients, employers and for branch organisations and they often work together with more than one stakeholder in the client's trajectory.

- **General info about the clients.**

The clients come from different educational and professional backgrounds and seek counselling for various reasons.

Client   1:
Client "Naomi" is a 55-year-old female from Surinam origin, living and working in the Amsterdam region in the Netherlands. She is reorienting herself on her career. She has worked for several years now in the cleaning industry and is active in the union. In Suriname, she completed practical healthcare training, but this qualification does not provide much value in the Netherlands. As a result, she often finds herself in unskilled positions. Reflecting on her union work, Naomi has identified the need to further develop her digital competences, particularly in areas such as social media and communication. She recognizes that enhancing her digital skills is crucial to advancing in both her union role and potential future career paths.

Client   2:
Client "Robert J. " is a 51-year-old male from the centre part of the Netherlands. After he finalised secondary school did his bachelor's degree in the field of environmental science and after that he specialized in the legal aspects of environmental science through courses and further training. He works at a regional Council for the Environment in a policy position. In his work, he dealt with the Environmental Act in the field of assessing and granting permits. As legislation has changed, his function has also changed and has become redundant. He has received a lot of education, but it is very much focused on a very specific field. This makes it more difficult to deploy in other areas. He knows everything about that one specific Environmental Act, but outside of that he lacks the necessary competences. Due to his redundancy, he is forced to orientate on other fields of work. He is desperate for support to reconsider his future and does not have a clear view on the steps he needs to take. Due to his specialist training, he has a considerable backlog in working with new software and applications that lie outside his specialism.

- **General info about the employers, gender, professional role, companies, reasons for their involvement**

The involvement of employers in the counseling process varied between cases. While no employer was engaged in Julia's case on her request, in the case of Robert the employer was not involved in the first phases of the process. Only when the facilitation of training was needed the employer was involved.

Employer 1 (Case: Naomi)

No information was provided.

Employer 2 (Case: Robert)

The team leader of the Regional Council for the Environment is also a party to the process, in the sense that the client initially had a free hand to shape the career path. But at a certain point, R.'s team leader also wanted to participate in the form of a three-way conversation. The client preferred not to do that at the time. It is an individual process, and the organization should not have any direct influence on it. The employer's input was therefore more in the realization phase, when the preference had been determined and it was necessary to look at what was possible internally.

On a 5-point Likert scale, the involvement of the employer was rated as 3: partially helpful at the end of the process.

- **General info about the training providers, and activities provided**

The involvement of training providers played an important role in both cases, though their impact on the counseling process varied.

In Naomi's case the training provider was NHA. This is a Dutch abbreviation for Nederlandse Handels Academie (National Trade Academy). The NHA was founded in 1930 by a teacher who wanted to make education affordable and accessible to everyone. NHA is a private provider that offers courses, training and education in a wide spectrum of offerings both in leisure and vocational professional training and education. Online and onsite at basic, primary, secondary and tertiary level, bachelor and masters. NHA offers training opportunities onsite and online, in individual distance learning and group conditions. The NHA is one of the training providers whose offerings meet the needs of Naomi.

In the case of Robert J. there were more training providers involved. On the one hand the Bestuursacademie (Academy of Governance) was involved, with the intention to broaden Robert's expertise by following a course in the field of '*Spatial Planning and the environment'*. The advantage of this is that it is an e-learning with a virtual classroom. The training is organized by the Bestuursacademie.

The training activities provided by the Institution are the following: Spatial Planning and the environment. On the other hand, the NCOI was involved. NCOI (Nederland's Commerciale Opleidingsinstituut) offers training called: '*HBO Project management PRINCE2® program*'. The NCOI was involved to provide an upskilling program in the state of art knowledge on project management applications (PRINCE2).

On a 5-point Likert scale, the involvement of the training providers in both cases was rated as very useful (scale 4: a lot) at the end of the process.

PART 2: The Roundabout and its Phases

Phase 1. Engagement.

In this phase, the counseling process was assessed based on three key aspects: establishing a transparent and secure relationship, addressing concerns, and clarifying responsibilities for the next steps. The evaluation was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). In both cases the score on the Likert scale was rated at all three aspects as very successful 4 (a lot). These results indicate a strong foundation of trust and clarity in both cases.

An important aspect of the multi-actor approach was that during the whole process in both cases the awareness of the involvement of the other actors was present. In the engagement phase, but also in the phases that followed other actors were actively involved.

The evaluation was based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). In both cases this aspect was rated as very successful 4 (a lot). These results indicate a high level of success in integrating relevant stakeholders into the counseling process in both cases.

Several factors were identified as crucial for the success of the counseling process in its first phase.

In the case of Naomi, the client was referred by the branch organization. The counsellor reached out to Naomi to get acquainted and discuss her situation and needs. She was easy to contact, and a first meeting was quickly scheduled. During the initial meeting, Naomi shared a great deal about herself and her background. She expressed her excitement about the contact and was eager to begin the guidance process.

In the case of Robert, the client was able to participate because the employer had agreed to pay for the costs of the trajectory.

Reflecting on the success factors the issues that were mentioned concern the quality of the relevant stakeholders in engaging to collaborate in the process.

In this stage, the counselor did not distinguish any severe barriers. There was an aspect that is of relevance. It is important to be aware that in some cases (like the Naomi case) the client is not willing to involve other stakeholders (like the employer) at the start of the counselling process.

The counselors evaluated the process description regarding its usefulness and effectiveness, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). In both cases the counsellor rated the process description as very *useful and effective (4 a lot)*. No modifications or additions were reported.

- **Phase 2. Assessment**

The counsellor reported quite large differences in the evaluation.

In the case of Naomi, the overall rating differed from 2 (a little) to 4 (a lot) on the Likert scale. The counsellor explained that assessment was not part of the trajectory of the client (beside the clarifying of her career needs in the intake conversation. In the case of Robert, the general rating was 4 (a lot), apart from the last question

related to the guidance in the evaluation /reflection of the self-assessment procedures, which was rated 3 (partially), because the counsellor explained that the client was well able to self-assess his digital competences.

As regards the involvement of the cooperation partners, with the contract to clarify digital requirements, in the case of Naomi this was answered as 1 (not at all) on the Likert scale. In the case of Robert this question was not answered. In the case of Naomi in this stage there was no involvement of the employer nor assessment providers (Likert scale 1: not at all). The use of LMI was rated as 4 (a lot).

In the case of Robert, the employer's involvement was rated as 1 (not at all). The use of LMI and the involvement of assessment providers was rated as 4 (a lot). In the assessment phase in the Naomi case the counsellor mentions that the client was very collaborative in clarifying her situation and her needs and wishes towards her career question. The collaboration with the training providers and the organisation that provided the funding went smoothly and was helpful in achieving the demanded progress in the trajectory. It is worth mentioning that by respecting Naomi's wish not to include her employers she fully felt taken seriously in her trajectory. In the Robert case the counsellor reflects that involving Robert in his self-assessment regarding his current situation and the desired situation can be seen as a success factor.

The complicating factor in the Naomi case was that she was not willing to include her employers in her career plans. The factor trust was an important obstacle in the networking approach. Because not all stakeholders were involved the communication within the network around the client was more complicated. In the Robert case the employer is also a party to the process, in the sense that the client initially had a free hand to shape the career path. But at a certain point, Robert's team leader also wanted to talk in the form of a three-way conversation. The client preferred not to do that at the time. It is an individual process, and the organization should not have any direct influence on it. A multi-actor approach is positive in that respect, but it can also complicate matters at times when conflicting interests may be at play.

The counselors evaluated the process description regarding its usefulness and effectiveness, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). In both cases the counsellor rated the process description as very *useful and effective (4 a lot)*.

In the case of Naomi, the counsellor mentioned that the Roundabout method assumes that a systematic assessment is part of the process. But in his setting assessment is only included in the trajectory when there are specific questions or uncertainties regarding competences or interests of the client. In most cases one or two intake conversations and interviews is sufficient. In the case of Robert, no modifications or additions were reported.

- **Phase 3 Planning**

In both cases the development of the goals described was reported by the counsellor. In both cases the counsellor rated this with 3 (partially) on the Likert scale. In the case of Naomi, the client Naomi appreciated very much the counsellor's active role in including other stakeholders. She also appreciated that the

counsellor respected her wish to not include her employers. In the Robert case the counsellor reflects that he did not explicitly discuss the Roundabout method, but he clarified the stages in general in terms of the method he uses within his company, which are quite similar.

As regards how the goals are now clear and differentiated in steps and the decisions to undertake are clear, in the case of Naomi this was rated 4 (a lot). In the case of Robert, it was rated 3 (partially). In both cases the counsellor states that the decisions were clarified. It was rated 4 (a lot) on the Likert scale.

Both counselors confirmed that they provided support. And agreed on how to proceed.

In the case of Naomi, the counsellor provided support using orientation knowledge, search strategies, relevant contacts and funding. In the case of Robert, the counsellor provided support using orientation knowledge and knowledge of search strategies.

In both cases the counsellor confirmed that it was possible to involve training providers to test the feasibility of the objectives and that suitable providers had already been identified. The evaluation was the same as above.

As regards factors relevant to the success of the process, in the case of Naomi, the counsellor mentions her ability to do a lot herself. He mainly helped her to clarify her needs and the option and helped her to fill in the application and the paperwork. In the case of Robert, the counsellor sees as a success factor Robert's ability to manage his own trajectory and single handedly identify his search profile and trajectory goals.

There were no specific barriers mentioned by the counsellor.

The counselors evaluated the process description regarding its usefulness and effectiveness, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). In both cases the counsellor rated the process description as very *useful and effective (4 a lot)*.

- **Phase 4 Action**

In the case of Naomi, the counsellor rated the active participation with 5 (completely). The number of times the client contacted the counsellor, or the other stakeholders was rated with 4 (Often). In the case of Robert, the counsellor rated the active participation with 4 (a lot). The number of times the client contacted the counsellor, or the other stakeholders was rated with 3 (sometimes)

In both cases the counsellor rated the level of support before the start of further training (e.g., contracts, applications, agreements) as 2 (a little) because both clients were able to manage things by themselves.

The counsellor reported that the cooperation was 3 (partially) and that the stakeholders collaborated very well 4 (a lot).

As for factors relevant to the success of the process in the case of Naomi, the counsellor mentions as Success Factors the client's ability to solve things herself. Besides that, the tight collaboration with all partners involved and the counsellors network connections can also be seen as success factors. Counsellors network connections can also be seen as success factors. In the case of Robert, involving the employer in the action

stage of the trajectory and informing him on the goals and steps to be taken helped to arrange for the training and for the secondment construction together with the HR-department.

There are no barriers mentioned concerning this stage.

The counselors evaluated the process description regarding its usefulness and effectiveness, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = completely). In both cases the counsellor rated the process description as very useful and effective (4 a lot). No modifications are mentioned.

- **Phase 5 Results**

In both cases at the moment of reporting the training process is on its way. Both clients started their training. Both clients stayed in contact with the counsellor rated as 3 (sometimes).

There was no need to provide further clarification or support in the transfer.

As regards factors relevant to the success of the process, in the case of Naomi, the client is doing well in her training course. She is enthusiastic about the content and so far, her results are encouraging.

In the case of Robert, involving both his current employer (Roberts team leader and the HR-department of the Council) and his secondment provider (the project manager of the project at The Water Board) in the agreement were mentioned as success factors by the counsellor.

In the case of Naomi, no barriers are mentioned. In the case of Robert as a barrier the risk that no suitable vacancies occur is mentioned.

In both cases the counsellor found the provided process description to be very useful and effective (4 a lot). Neither of them indicated modifications or additions.

- **Phase 6 Evaluation**

In both cases the client did not actively contribute to the evaluation. Findings and experiences relevant beyond the individual case to cooperation partners in both cases were rated as 4 (often).

In both cases the other stakeholders were not included in the evaluation process because the trajectory is not completed yet.

As for relevant factors relevant to the success of the process, in the case of Naomi, structured network sessions with the network partners and monitoring the trajectories on a caseload level were mentioned as success factors. In the case of Robert, including the employer in the right stage of the process was mentioned as a success factor.

As regards barriers, in the case of Naomi, no barriers were mentioned. In the case of Robert, the availability of vacancies can be seen as a (possible) barrier.

In both cases the counsellor found the provided process description to be very useful and effective (4 a lot). Neither of them indicated modifications or additions.

- **Final questions: comments from the counsellors.**

1.After piloting the process, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the Roundabout for the six phases? What are the crucial moments/turning points?

The methodically structured phases.

The emphasis on networking and involving other partners.

My early involvement in the initiative to involve the branch organisation and the funding organisation.

The structured evaluation on the caseload level.

2. When did you involve the employers, the training providers, and the other stakeholders? How did you involve them? What were the difficulties (if any) and how did you overcome them?

Case Naomi: We did not involve the employers. The other stakeholders were involved from the start. Since Naomi initiated her trajectory with the branch organisation. They involved me.

Case Robert: We actively involved them after the goal setting and action planning stage. Of course, the employer was involved in facilitating the CGC trajectory in terms of funding, but active involvement was established in the action planning. This also goes for the training providers.

3. Is there any other person in the organizations involved that facilitated or barriered the roundabout process?

Case Naomi: No, this could possibly have been the case if we would have involved her employers.

Case Robert: From the employers' side Roberts team leader and the consultant from the HR-department were involved in the facilitation of the training and the secondment construction. The same goes for the involvement of the project manager and the HR-advisor from the Water Board.

4. Did you use any digital tool? For what? Was it useful?

No, besides the online application forms for the funding and for the training.

5.What are the Roundabout aspects, and related choices you may bring into your professional practice?

The methodical approach of the roundabout phases. And the structured network meetings with partners in the guidance.

6. What would you introduce in a Roundabout Training Course for future CGC professionals?

The handbook and the evaluation form (in a simplified/shorter way)

7. Is there anything we did not consider, and you think would be relevant to keep in mind?

The method is very thorough and detailed. But in real life a practitioner does not have the time and possibilities to work like that. This asks for a flexible way of implementing it in an organisation.

3.4 Roundabout implementation: AUSTRIAN national evaluation

This chapter focuses on the pilot phase in Austria, which was coordinated by the University for Continuing Education Krems (UWK) as part of the CGC DigiTrans project.

The aim of the pilot phase was to test the CGC Roundabouts method in practice, evaluating its applicability within multi-actor career guidance approaches. However, despite intensive recruitment efforts, it was not possible to engage a sufficient number of career counselors to participate in the pilot phase.

This lack of participation was not due to a fundamental disinterest in multi-actor approaches. Many institutions in Austria already apply similar collaborative methods in their work, particularly in the context of active labor market policies. However, integrating an additional pilot project into existing structures proved challenging due to limited institutional capacities and resource constraints. To still gain meaningful insights into the implementation of multi-actor collaboration in Austria, a series of interviews was conducted with professionals experienced in workforce development, employer engagement, and career counseling. These interviews provided valuable perspectives on how multi-actor approaches function in practice and the challenges associated with their implementation.

Given the absence of direct pilot experiences, this chapter takes a broader perspective by:

1. Examining the recruitment strategies employed to encourage career counselors to participate in the pilot phase.
2. Providing an overview of the Austrian career guidance system, including key stakeholders, structures, and funding mechanisms.
3. Presenting key insights from interviews with professionals experienced in multi-actor collaboration, particularly regarding employer engagement in workforce development.
4. Identifying structural challenges and success factors that influence the feasibility of multi-actor career guidance approaches in Austria.

The conclusion reflects on the lessons learned from the Austrian context, emphasizing that while multi-actor approaches are considered valuable, their implementation requires clearly defined structures, pre-established institutional roles, and long-term coordination efforts. The findings highlight the difficulty of establishing such frameworks within the limited timeframe of a pilot phase and suggest that future initiatives should embed multi-actor approaches within existing institutional structures to ensure sustainable implementation.

- **Recruitment Efforts for Pilot Participants**

Despite intensive efforts, it was not possible to recruit a sufficient number of career counselors to participate in the pilot phase of the CGC DigiTrans project in Austria. Various strategies were implemented to encourage participation, including the development of a professional network, targeted outreach campaigns, direct engagement with stakeholders, collaboration with associations, the establishment of a cross-border learning community, and interviews with experienced organizations. While these measures helped to deepen

relationships with key actors and expand the project's visibility, they ultimately did not lead to the expected level of participation.

One of the central strategies was the establishment and engagement of an expert community. From the beginning of the project, a network of career counselors was built to facilitate knowledge exchange and create a foundation for potential pilot participation. Several informational events were organized to introduce the CGC Roundabouts method, explaining its objectives and potential benefits. These events were designed to familiarize counselors with the approach, provide space for discussion, and lower potential reservations about engaging in the pilot phase.

Another key initiative involved targeted information campaigns. Multiple rounds of email communication were directed at individuals who had attended previous informational events. These emails provided additional details about the pilot phase and included materials designed to clarify expectations regarding the implementation of the method. The goal was to maintain engagement with potential participants and ensure that they had all necessary information to make an informed decision.

In addition to broad outreach efforts, personalized engagement with relevant stakeholders played a crucial role. Career counselors were contacted directly via email and telephone to discuss potential involvement in the pilot phase. These individual discussions focused on presenting concrete pilot scenarios, outlining how the method could be applied in different career counseling settings, and addressing concerns regarding feasibility and workload.

To extend the project's reach, the team engaged in collaboration with professional networks and associations. The pilot phase was actively promoted through the Association of Social Enterprises in Lower Austria, leveraging existing institutional structures to reach potential participants. This approach aimed to embed the pilot within established professional frameworks, thereby increasing its perceived relevance among practitioners.

A further effort to support recruitment was the establishment of a cross-border learning community in collaboration with the German project partner. This initiative was designed to strengthen the methodological competencies of potential participants, foster exchange between Austrian and German career counselors, and build confidence in the feasibility of the CGC Roundabouts method. The underlying expectation was that by deepening participants' understanding of the approach, more career counselors would ultimately be encouraged to take part in the pilot phase.

Finally, interviews were conducted with institutions experienced in multi-actor collaboration, particularly those that had previously engaged in projects involving both career counseling and employer engagement. These interviews aimed to gather practical insights on the implementation of multi-actor approaches while also serving as a recruitment tool. By strengthening relationships with these organizations, the project team hoped to inspire individual counselors within these networks to participate in the pilot phase.

Despite the broad range of recruitment efforts, several persistent barriers to participation emerged. Many career counselors expressed interest in multi-actor approaches but cited structural constraints, such as limited time and resources, as key reasons for not engaging in the pilot. Additionally, while the CGC Roundabouts method was recognized as valuable, many practitioners perceived its implementation as requiring a level of institutional support that was not readily available within the scope of the pilot phase. These challenges underscored the difficulties of integrating multi-actor guidance approaches within short-term pilot projects and highlighted the need for long-term structural support to facilitate their adoption.

- **Educational and Career Guidance in Austria: Key Actors, Structures, and Funding**

Key Actors and Institutions

Educational and career guidance in Austria involves multiple stakeholders at the national, regional, and institutional levels. Key actors include public authorities, social partner organizations, educational institutions, NGOs, and private service providers.

At the national level, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) plays a central role in setting strategic priorities and funding career guidance initiatives, alongside the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Labor, which focus on labor market integration and workforce development. The Public Employment Service (AMS) is a major provider, operating Career Information Centers (BIZ) and offering career counseling, workshops, and digital resources for job seekers and individuals considering further education.

Social partner organizations also contribute significantly. The Economic Chambers (WKO) provide career information centers, focusing on apprenticeships and vocational training, while the Chambers of Labor (AK) offer advisory services and co-finance regional guidance initiatives. Additionally, schools, universities, NGOs, and private counseling providers play a role in delivering targeted guidance services.

Structure and Service Provision

Austria's career guidance system is decentralized, with services provided through regional networks and national initiatives. The Bildungsberatung Österreich program ensures nationwide accessibility, offering free, neutral guidance services across all federal states.

Career counseling is available in various formats, including in-person sessions, telephone-based guidance, email consultations, and video advisory services. Schools follow a structured model that includes career orientation courses, school counselors, and psychological support services, while universities provide dedicated student advisory services.

Funding of Career Guidance Services

Career guidance in Austria is financed through a mixed model, combining public funding from federal, state, and municipal levels, contributions from social partners, and in some cases, private payments for specialized coaching services.

The European Social Fund (ESF) plays a crucial role in co-financing career guidance, particularly in adult education. Programs like Bildungsberatung Österreich rely on a combination of BMBWF funding and ESF grants to maintain free access to services. AMS-funded programs, youth coaching, and digital career platforms are fully financed through public funds.

Long-term stability in financing is regarded as a key success factor for career guidance in Austria. Experts advocate for transitioning away from short-term project-based funding toward institutionalized financial support, ensuring guidance remains a permanent and well-integrated element of Austria's education and labor market system.

Multi-Actor Approaches in Active Labor Market Policy

While traditional career guidance remains largely institution-based, multi-actor approaches are well-established in active labor market policies, integrating career orientation, skills development, and employer engagement.

Programs led by AMS and other labor market organizations typically follow a three-phase model:

1. Career Orientation: Individualized counseling, skills assessments, and workshops help job seekers identify suitable career paths.

2. Implementation of Measures: Training programs, internships, and employment trials facilitate skills development.

3. Outplacement and Job Placement: Application coaching, employer outreach, and structured job placements ensure successful labor market transitions.

A key example is the "Jobchancen" program by Menschen und Arbeit GmbH, which facilitates temporary employment through non-profit labor leasing, offering structured workforce integration strategies for job seekers. Similarly, the "Qualifizierung Nachhaltigkeit" initiative supports companies in identifying workforce upskilling needs and implementing targeted training programs.

While these programs do not always integrate direct career counselor-employer collaboration, they demonstrate the effectiveness of multi-actor engagement in workforce development. Success factors include clear communication of benefits, flexible participation formats, and targeted employer support, ensuring the long-term labor market integration of job seekers.

In summary, Austria's career guidance system is based on cooperation between multiple stakeholders, with multi-actor elements most strongly embedded in active labor market policies. The lessons learned from existing programs emphasize that effective multi-actor collaboration requires well-defined roles, long-term commitment, and structured operational frameworks to be successful.

- **Summary of Projects and Insights**

The following section provides an overview of key projects that exemplify multi-actor collaboration in career guidance and workforce development in Austria. These projects illustrate the various ways in which different stakeholders—employers, training institutions, labor market actors, and policymakers—interact to facilitate skills development and labor market integration.

"Du kannst was" – Validation and Completion of Vocational Training

The "Du kannst was" project, initiated by the Chamber of Labour Lower Austria (Arbeiterkammer Niederösterreich), aimed to support individuals without formal vocational qualifications by providing a structured pathway to validate their existing skills and complete their vocational training. The program targeted employees with extensive work experience who had never obtained official certification in their respective fields.

A key element of this initiative was the close collaboration between multiple stakeholders. Employers and works councils played a crucial role in identifying potential participants and facilitating their engagement by providing the necessary time and support for training. Educational institutions, such as BFI and WIFI, were responsible for delivering targeted training courses to address identified skill gaps, ensuring that participants met the necessary requirements for certification. The Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer) was tasked with organizing and supervising the final vocational exams, ensuring that the certification met national standards.

Despite its strong collaborative framework, the project faced challenges in employer engagement. Many companies were hesitant to allow employees to participate in training during working hours, citing productivity concerns. Additionally, negotiating with works councils required extensive effort to align priorities and create incentives for employee participation. However, the project demonstrated that strong multi-actor collaboration is possible when all stakeholders recognize mutual benefits. Providing low-threshold, workplace-based consultations proved to be an effective strategy in increasing accessibility, and clearly defined processes and quality standards were crucial in maintaining trust and ensuring consistent outcomes.

"Generations in Work" – Promoting Sustainable HR Strategies

The "Generations in Work" project, implemented by Menschen und Arbeit GmbH, focused on helping businesses develop sustainable HR strategies by addressing workplace challenges such as work-life balance, equality, and anti-discrimination. The project aimed to create customized solutions that would benefit both employers and employees, fostering more inclusive and adaptable workplace environments.

Employer collaboration was central to the project's success. Businesses actively participated in designing tailored HR strategies that aligned with their company-specific needs. Employees were also involved in the process through workshops and interviews, ensuring that proposed solutions reflected their perspectives and

experiences. In addition to internal engagement, funding agencies and HR networks provided financial and institutional support, facilitating a broader dissemination of project outcomes.

One of the main challenges in implementing this initiative was securing long-term commitment from employers. Many companies were initially hesitant to invest in structural changes without clear evidence of direct organizational benefits. To address this, the project team emphasized flexible scheduling and provided concrete case studies demonstrating the positive impact of similar initiatives in other businesses. The project highlighted the importance of involving both employers and employees in the change process, as well as the role of external stakeholders in amplifying project impact.

Skills Assessment and Development for Businesses

The Wirtschaftskammer Niederösterreich (WKO) launched a skills assessment and development service aimed at helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) navigate digital transformation by identifying workforce skill gaps and implementing targeted upskilling initiatives. The program recognized that many SMEs lacked structured strategies for workforce development, particularly in relation to emerging digital competencies.

The success of this initiative relied on close cooperation between businesses and training providers. Employers played a leading role in assessing their workforce's skill levels and setting strategic training goals. Training institutions then collaborated with companies to design and deliver relevant upskilling programs, ensuring that employees acquired competencies directly aligned with organizational needs.

A significant challenge in engaging employers was balancing their short-term productivity demands with long-term workforce development goals. Many businesses were reluctant to allocate time and resources for employee training, particularly in industries with high operational pressures. Additionally, convincing employers of the value of investing in digital competencies required extensive awareness-building efforts. The project demonstrated that employer-driven skills assessments are crucial for aligning workforce development with business objectives. Furthermore, designing collaborative training programs with a focus on practical, job-relevant outcomes was essential in securing employer buy-in.

General Insights into Multi-Actor Collaboration

The case studies highlight several key success factors for multi-actor collaboration in workforce development and career guidance.

One of the most critical elements is stakeholder acceptance. Projects are most successful when all participating actors—whether employers, employees, training providers, or funding agencies—recognize the direct benefits of their involvement. Ensuring that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of quality standards is also essential, as it fosters consistent and reliable service delivery across different institutions.

Trust and communication emerged as fundamental drivers of effective collaboration. Transparent and regular communication among partners builds trust and helps align expectations, making it easier to coordinate joint initiatives. Moreover, ensuring accessibility and flexibility—such as offering workplace-based consultations or modular training formats—can significantly improve participation rates.

However, the interviews also revealed common challenges in implementing multi-actor approaches. Resource constraints were frequently cited as a limiting factor, particularly regarding financial support and staff capacity. Many organizations and employers lacked the time and budget to fully engage in long-term workforce development programs. Employer hesitation also posed a recurring issue, as some businesses were concerned about potential productivity losses or were unaware of the benefits of participation. Additionally, ensuring consistency across multiple actors was a persistent challenge. If one stakeholder failed to meet expectations—whether in terms of quality standards, engagement levels, or delivery capacity—the entire process could be jeopardized.

To address these challenges, several best practices were identified. Leveraging works councils as key intermediaries proved to be an effective strategy for reaching employees directly and fostering trust in workplace-based training initiatives. Conducting consultations at accessible locations, such as workplaces or community centers, helped increase participation among target groups. Additionally, offering structured yet adaptable processes allowed programs to accommodate diverse participant needs while maintaining a clear operational framework.

- **Conclusion**

The projects analyzed in this section illustrate how multi-actor collaboration can enhance workforce development initiatives when well-structured frameworks and stakeholder alignment are in place. While challenges such as employer engagement, resource limitations, and process consistency remain, these case studies demonstrate that successful implementation is possible through well-defined roles, clear communication strategies, and flexible service models.

The lessons learned from these projects underscore the necessity of long-term planning and institutional backing to support multi-actor approaches effectively. Future initiatives seeking to incorporate multi-actor collaboration in career guidance and workforce development must ensure that adequate structural support is provided, as short-term pilot programs often lack the resources and stability required to achieve sustainable outcomes.

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3.5 General evaluation based on quantitative questions

In this section we will report the results from the quantitative questions proposed to counselors and reported in the grid for the evaluation of the Roundabout. This categorical analysis was conducted on the total of the 8 fully completed cases, 4 cases from Italy, 2 from Germany and 2 from the Netherlands. As reported in the appendix, counselors were asked to respond to our questions (question example: "Did you succeed in building a relationship, with transparency and security?") on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all and 5 = very much). The responses provided were categorized into 3 different nominal categories: "A little" (responses 1 - 3); "A lot" (responses 4 - 5); and "Missing."

Below are the most informative results obtained for the Roundabout phases.

Phase 1 Engagement: As can be observed from Table 1 presented below, all counselors report that they were able to effectively perform all the necessary steps related to Phase 1 of the method.

	Phase 1 Engagement					
	Did you succeed in building a relationship, with transparency and security?	*Did you succeed in clarifying the possible concerns?*	*Did you succeed in clarifying responsibility on how to proceed and establishing a contract?*	*Did you clarify with the client whether other actors already play a role (e.g. employer or education provider) and whether previous activities have already taken place?*	*Did you clarify if their involvement as cooperation partners is a possibility?*	*Is the provided process description useful and effective?*
A little (1 - 3)	0	0	0	2	2	3
A lot (4-5)	8	8	8	6	6	5
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1: Frequency of the answers given to the questions asked about Phase 1 Engagement

Despite the positive self-assessment, it is possible to observe a slight difficulty on the part of the consultants in involving other actors/cooperation partners. Regarding the process description provided, most of the

consultant's report that it was very/very helpful. It is reported that for three participants the description was "only quite helpful."

Phase 2 Assessment: As can be observed from the self-assessments, shown in Table 2 (*a* and *b*), all counselors report that they were able to effectively perform all the necessary steps related to this Phase with the exception of the steps related to the involvement of other actors/cooperation partners, where a decrease in the self-efficacy scores expressed by the consultants involved can be observed.

	Phase 2 Assessment (a)					
	Did you clarify the situation with the client?	*Did you support the client through question impulses?*	*Did you use knowledge about professions?*	*Did you devote some time to developing proposals and plan actions?*	*Was the choice of the procedures appropriate to the client's "State of Mind"?*	*Did you describe/mention the current requirements in his/her profession/activity?*
A little (1 - 3)	1	0	2	1	0	2
A lot (4-5)	7	8	6	7	8	6
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2a: Frequency analysis of the answers given to the questions asked about Phase 2 Assessment

Regarding the process description provided, most of the counselors report that it was very/extremely helpful. It is reported that for three participants the description was "only quite helpful."

	Phase 2 Assessment (b)					
	Did you provide guidance in the evaluation /reflection of the self-assessment procedures/ outcomes?	*Did you involve cooperation partners, where appropriate, with the contract to clarify digital requirements?*	*Did you involve the employer in working on requirements?*	*Did you use the LMI to identify competence requirements?*	*Did you cooperate with providers of competence self-assessments?*	*Is the provided process description useful and effective?*
A little (1 - 3)	2	6	7	5	7	3
A lot (4-5)	6	1	0	3	1	5
Missing	0	1	1	0	0	0

Table 2b: Frequency analysis of the answers given to the questions asked about Phase 2 Assessment

Phase 3 Planning: as can be seen from the self-assessments, shown in Table 3, although the self-efficacy scores in the third step is slightly lower than the subsequent steps, almost all of the counselors report that they are very clear about the operational decisions to be made for the implementation of the next steps. Regarding the process description provided, most counselors report that it was very/very helpful. It is reported that for only three participants the description was "only quite useful.".

	Phase 3 Planning			
	Did you collect client opinions on what you discussed until now, the	*Are the goals now clear and differentiated in steps?*	*Are the decisions to undertake clear?*	*Is the provided process description*

	roundabout framework, the conditions, etc?			useful and effective?
A little (1 - 3)	5	3	1	2
A lot (4-5)	3	5	7	6
Missing	0	0	0	0

Table 3: Frequency of the answers given to the questions asked about Phase 3 Planning

Results Phase 4 Action: From the answers provided by the counselors and shown in Table 4, it is possible to say that for most of them the action was implemented quite satisfactorily. Some more difficulties emerge in the actions that require involvement and active collaboration with other actors.

	Phase 4 Action						
	Did the client actively participate in further training measures?	*Did the client contact you, the company, or the training provider when needed?*	*Did you support steps necessary before the start of the further training (e.g. contracts, applications, agreements)?*	*Did you provide clarification or support on the training process if requested?*	*Did you cooperate with employers and training providers to clarify steps needed before starting training?*	*Did the cooperation partners support implementation of the measure?*	*Is the provided process description useful and effective?*
A little (1 - 3)	3	4	2	4	5	4	2
A lot (4-5)	5	4	4	4	3	4	5

Missing	0	0	2	0	0	0	1

Table 4: Frequency analysis of the answers given to the questions asked about Phase 4 Action

Regarding the process description provided, most of the counselors report that it was very/extremely helpful. For only two participants the description was only fairly useful.

Phase 5 and 6 Results and Evaluation: From the self-assessments, shown in Table 5, it is possible to state that the counselors had some difficulties in the process of sharing the results from the client related to the training course. Regarding the closing phase we note an increase in non-response from participants.

	Phase 5 Results		Phase 6 Evaluation		
	Did the client inform you about the results (if applicable)?	*Is the provided process description useful and effective?*	*Did you guide evaluation / reflection?*	*Did you open to suggestions, wishes, criticism?*	*Is the provided process description useful and effective?*
A little (1 - 3)	5	0	2	0	2
A lot (4-5)	2	5	3	6	6
Missing	1	3	3	2	0

 Table 5: Frequency analysis of the answers given to the questions asked about step 5 Results and 6 Evaluation.

Regarding description of the process for both step 5 and 6 provided, most counselors report that it was very/very helpful.

General comment on the quantitative evaluation. Overall, the evaluation provided by the counselors from Italy, Germany and Netherlands, suggests that the material developed was considered very useful for the implementation of the method in all its different phases. The most encountered challenges concern the involvement of third parties in the counseling process, and joint and participatory monitoring with the training providers. If on one side these results confirm the meaning and relevance of the Roundabout methodology,

on the other it drives the attention to taking particular care on the networking and the work with stakeholders. This represents the most important point of innovation of the Roundabout and a new challenge also for expert professionals who are requested to review their usual way of working.

3.6 Five informative case studies

Among the ten case studies conducted with active engagement of professionals and their network a set of cases have been selected.

The five case studies more informative about the implementation of the roundabout methodology have been selected based on their development and the diversity of clients and stakeholders involved in the Roundabout. Basic information is provided here. We decided to develop an additional booklet aimed at providing an extended description of the cases more in depth contributing to the piloting of the roundabout and mainly referred to in the activities proposed in the Curriculum developed in Work Package 4.

A.A. is a 34-year-old employee living in Italy. After a bachelor's degree at 24 years old, she attempted to continue her studies to earn a master's degree. At the same time, she continued to work as an employee at a gym in her hometown of which she became manager after a short time. Reconciling work and study became increasingly difficult, and so A., after a few years, decided to drop out of the university even though she was very close to obtaining her master's degree. Later AA. got married and in the same year decided to restart her studies by enrolling in a telematics university. Currently, A.A. is working in a small post urology studio and has a master's degree in physical and sporting activities. Her course of study and work has been overly complex and troubled.

She wants to change jobs and become a schoolteacher but to do so she needs to acquire new digital skills, the digital skills required in the specific work role.

GC is 23 years old and has a high school diploma in human sciences. Currently, GC is a university student, and she lives in the city hosting her university for half the week and returning to her parents' home for the remainder of the days. GC requested help from the university turning to a tutor because she needs to start writing her dissertation. She reports she is unfamiliar with digital tools and has difficulties both in finding scientific sources online and in using Word for writing her thesis. She reports being always afraid of doing something wrong and losing or deleting her work. During the Pandemic she experienced difficulties in managing the online platforms on which lectures were delivered and in taking distance examinations.

She has never taken a digital skills course and describes herself as 'self-taught'.

Rebin Kazem is 35 years old. She obtained her university entrance qualification in Iraq. She did not complete any further education after leaving school. Mrs. Kazem married young and had children. She is now a single mother of five children, four of whom are minors, and one of whom is over 18 years old. She is not currently working. Recently took part in job-search and training measures. However, she is pursuing the goal of working soon. In this context, she lacks digital skills that could qualify her for an office job. Specifically, Mrs. Kazem assumes that she needs to build up digital skills. She is motivated for the potential job, and she knows that the job also requires documentation. Her fears of the new technology first had to be dispelled. She is worried that she might be overwhelmed by starting work.

During the counselling process, the counselor discussed with her that other stakeholders, in particular the potential employer and a suitable training provider, should be involved.

Naomi W. is a 55-year-old woman, with 20 years of experience, primarily in the cleaning sector. Originally from Suriname, Naomi moved to the Netherlands approximately 30 years ago. She is a single mother with four adult children, aged 22, 24, 27, and 29. Currently, Naomi is employed by four different cleaning companies, handling both domestic and office cleaning contracts.

Naomi expressed a strong desire to develop her digital and communication skills. Her educational journey is now in its final stages, and she is expected to complete her training by the end of the year. She expressed concerns about the industry's lack of commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for professional growth but also valuing her work.

Given Naomi's concerns, the counselor decided to involve a private educational institution offering a wide range of vocational and academic courses, both online and onsite, including bachelor's and master's programs. Additionally, the counselor engaged a branch organization that supports both employers and employees in the cleaning sector.

Robert is a 51-year-old Robert with a bachelor's degree in environmental science. Over the years, he further specialized in the legal aspects of environmental science through additional courses and professional training. Starting as an assistant, he quickly progressed to a senior policy position within five years. His role primarily involved working with the Environmental Act, assessing and granting permits, and contributing to various projects. The introduction of the Environment and Planning Act rendered his role nearly obsolete. As a result, he needed to reassess his career path and update his digital competencies.

Recognizing the need for career transition support, a counselor was assigned to assist him. To support his transition, the counselor engaged a training institution that offers an HBO Project Management program with PRINCE2® certification. The regional organization responsible for managing the quality and safety of Dutch waterways was also involved.

The specific partnership and networking activated was crucial for equipping Robert with state-of-the-art project management skills and securing financial arrangements for the training.

3.7 THE GUIDELINES for the Roundabout Method in CGC implementation

The German partner, based on the implementation of the roundabout across the four partners and the provided evaluation process, developed the guidelines for the long-term application of the Roundabout Method in CGC. These guidelines are intended for a diverse group of stakeholders engaged in career counselling, higher education, and strategic decision-making. A specific booklet was developed as a product of WP3.

4 Conclusions and remearks

The implementation of the Roundabout methodology across different national contexts has provided a rich and insightful overview of its transformative potential within career guidance services, particularly in addressing the challenges associated with digital transition. The piloted approach proved effective in supporting vulnerable clients, fostering awareness of their digital competencies, and enhancing self-efficacy through a structured, six-phase process.

One of the main strengths that emerged lies in the clarity and organization of the methodology. Counselors found the materials provided and structured tools particularly useful in guiding the process, allowing for tailored interventions based on each client's specific needs. The method's flexibility enabled successful adaptation across countries such as Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, while in Austria the adoption faced greater difficulties due to low practitioner engagement.

A core element of the methodology's effectiveness was the active involvement of external stakeholders (i.e., trainers, employers, public services), which made a multi-actor approach to career counseling possible. However, the success of such cooperation largely depends on the counselor's ability to sensitize and prepare the environment, fostering meaningful and synergic relationships. Building professional networks and reinforcing inter-institutional collaboration emerged as key enabling conditions for the intervention's success. Involving companies and owners is the most challenging element.

From the clients' perspective, the Roundabout method contributed to greater self-awareness and confidence, helping them develop the motivation to engage in training or re-employment paths. The outcomes achieved—ranging from new job opportunities to participation in targeted training and the formulation of concrete career plans—highlight a positive impact that can be considered socially and economically sustainable. In many cases, the process resulted in improved quality of life and the activation of valuable personal and professional resources.

Nevertheless, some barriers and challenges e. Among the most significant were psychological obstacles (low self-esteem, fear of change, stress management issues), as well as structural limitations such as rigid service procedures, tight deadlines, and limited access to digital resources. Digital illiteracy was a real constraint for many users, reinforcing the urgent need to strengthen digital competencies within career guidance pathways.

Looking ahead, further development of the methodology is recommended. This includes integrating self-assessment tools, continuous professional development for counselors, and a stronger focus on clients' psychological aspects. Additionally, it would be beneficial to create structured spaces for counselors to reflect on their own digital skills and monitor their professional growth.

In summary, the Roundabout emerges as a promising methodology for supporting career transitions in the digital age. It promotes inclusive, personalized, and resource-oriented pathways, capable of responding to the complex and evolving needs of individuals. By leveraging a structured yet adaptable process, and by actively involving local ecosystems, the Roundabout method has demonstrated its potential to enhance the impact of career guidance services and foster meaningful, long-term results.

5 Appendix 1

1. ROUNDABOUT CASE STUDY GRID: PHASE 1

Engagement: request/contracting, initial situation

1.1 Summary of process description and goals

A client seeks counselling individually.

Counsellor supports the client in describing the occasion, e.g. initial situation.

Counsellor and client clarify the concerns.

Counsellor makes suggestions on how to proceed (contracting).

****

1.2 Client observation

1. What are the client's thoughts and emotions on the occasion and the initial situation?

_____

_____

1.3 Roundabout Phase: goals achievement

1. Please answer the following questions considering that:

1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = partially; 4 = a lot; 5=completely

	1	2	3	4	5
Did you succeed in building a relationship, with transparency and security?	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
Did you succeed in clarifying the possible concerns?	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
Did you succeed in clarifying responsibility on how to proceed and establishing a contract?	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

1.4 Networking and Cooperation actions

1. Please answer the following questions considering that:

1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = partially; 4 = a lot; 5=completely

	1	2	3	4	5

Did you clarify with the client whether other actors already play a role (e.g. employer or education provider) and whether previous activities have already taken place?	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Did you clarify if their involvement as cooperation partners is a possibility?	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

1.5 Repletive Notes on the process

1. What are the reasons and requests regarding digital competences or professional development?

_____

_____

2. Did something unexpected emerge or is there something you left on the background that you should consider in the next meetings?

Please mention what and in which phase you would recall it:

_____

_____

1.6 Successful factors

1. Do you see any factors relevant for the success of the process?
Please describe them…

_____

_____

2. Do you see possible barriers to the success of the CC process?
Please describe them…

_____

_____

1.7 Evaluation of the Roundabout implementation

1. Is the provided process description useful and effective?

Not at all	A litte	Partially	A lot	Completely
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

2. Did you add or modify something?

Please explain: _____

_____

** Did you address the main points or goals characterizing this phase?

If yes, you can move to the next one!