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GSCG Toolkit

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Toolkit Introduction

Welcome to the Toolkit for Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance

In a world where gender bias continues to influence career choices and opportunities, it is essential to create a fairer and more inclusive approach to career guidance. This toolkit has been developed specifically for you as a counsellor or educational institution, to provide practical and interactive tools to identify and address gender bias in your career guidance practices.

You will find that this toolkit is not text-heavy. It has been designed to be as interactive as possible, engaging you through videos, quizzes, self-reflection tools, and more. The aim is to provide you with accessible and actionable guidance that you can implement directly into your practice.

By using this toolkit, you can challenge and change stereotypical perceptions of gender and professions. Together, we can shape a future where all individuals have equal opportunities to pursue their career aspirations without being limited by gender bias and stereotypical expectations.

Through collaboration and the implementation of these tools, we can work together to create a more inclusive and fair working world for future generations.

Note on Language Use

Throughout this Toolkit, we have made every effort to use inclusive and gender-sensitive language, recognising the importance of pronouns and terminology in supporting equality and respect. At the same time, to ensure clarity and accessibility for our multinational and multicultural audience, the terms man and woman are occasionally used when discussing gender stereotypes or labour market realities. This choice reflects our commitment to balancing inclusivity with clarity across diverse national contexts. The partnership has strived to apply language that is both respectful and understandable.

Note on National Context Annexes

To ensure that this Toolkit is meaningful and applicable across Europe, we have enriched the English version with Annexes prepared by each partner country. These annexes provide insights into the current national situation regarding gender-sensitive career guidance, highlighting specific challenges, policies, and good practices in different contexts. The inclusion of these annexes allows users/counsellors/educators/trainees to better understand how the general guidance offered in the Toolkit can be adapted to diverse cultural, educational, and labour-market realities. By combining a shared European framework with national perspectives, the Toolkit aims to be both practical and relevant for professionals working in a wide range of environments.



Section 1

Understanding Gender's Role in Career Guidance

Gender equality is a fundamental goal of modern societies and a key priority within the European Union. Despite numerous policy efforts to close **gender gaps** in employment and career opportunities, significant disparities persist. "The uneven concentration of different genders in various sectors of the labour market is a persistent problem in the EU. A significant share of workers in education, health and social work identify as women - 3 in 10 (while fewer identify as men - 8%), which are traditionally low-paid sectors. On the other hand, almost a third of men are employed in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (7% of women), which are higher-paid sectors." (European Commission, n.d.-a) These imbalances highlight that achieving gender equality in the labour market is still a distant goal.

The process of **career choice** begins early in life, often long before individuals formally enter the job market. From childhood, people absorb societal messages about which careers are considered suitable for their gender. These early influences shape their aspirations, interests, and eventual career decisions, reinforcing existing gender divides in the workforce. These deeply ingrained societal beliefs about the roles and abilities of men and women are **gender stereotypes**. "Gender stereotypes in all spheres of life influence very much people's choices of work they do and how they can combine it with private life. They are at the root of occupational, sectoral, time and hierarchical segregation between genders." (European Commission, n.d.-a)

Common stereotypes suggest that men are naturally inclined toward technical, leadership, and physically demanding professions, while women are more suited to caregiving, teaching, and administrative roles. These biases are perpetuated through **family expectations**, **education**

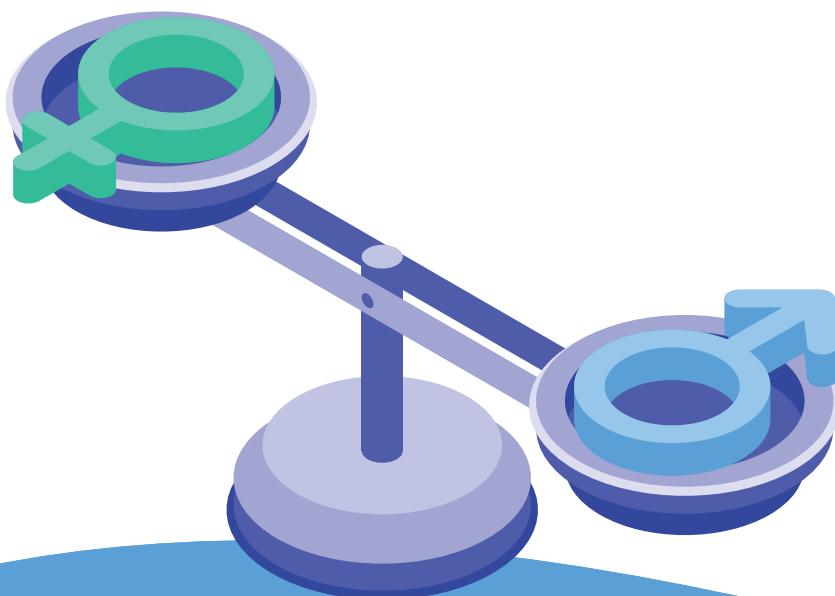
systems, **media portrayals**, and **workplace cultures**. As a result, many individuals unconsciously internalize these stereotypes and make career choices that conform to societal norms rather than their true interests and abilities.

Gender stereotypes create **tangible barriers** to career development. Women may hesitate to pursue careers in male-dominated fields due to a lack of role models or fear of discrimination. Similarly, men may avoid professions traditionally associated with women due to concerns about societal acceptance. These biases contribute to **occupational segregation**, limiting diversity in various sectors and reducing overall economic and social progress.

"It is important to challenge stereotypes at a young age in order to break them. We should also consider how gender stereotypes interact with other forms of prejudice, reinforcing discrimination." (European Commission, n.d.-b)

Career guidance plays a crucial role in challenging these stereotypes and promoting gender-sensitive career development. Effective career counselling helps individuals **recognize and question the gender norms that influence their choices**. By providing access to diverse role models, encouraging exploration of non-traditional career paths, and fostering a supportive environment, **career counsellors can** empower individuals to make decisions based on their skills and interests rather than societal expectations.

Furthermore, gender-sensitive career guidance involves **training counsellors** to recognize their own biases and use inclusive language when advising clients. It also includes developing resources such as self-reflection exercises, bias-awareness workshops, and career exploration **tools** that help individuals critically assess how gender norms may have shaped their aspirations.





Practical Application

Gender influences career choices and decision-making processes in many ways. Societal expectations, stereotypes, and cultural norms can shape how individuals perceive their own skills and opportunities. Below are key areas where gender plays a role, along with examples and [practical applications](#) that you as a career guidance professional can use.

1. Gendered Vocational Choices



Examples:

- Many young learners are [encouraged](#) to pursue careers in healthcare, education, or social work, while others are steered toward engineering, technology, and leadership roles, depending on gender norms.
- A study (Ruling Our eXperiences, 2024) found that despite having similar math abilities, girls are less likely to choose STEM fields due to a [lack of encouragement and confidence](#).
- Boys interested in caregiving roles (e.g., nursing, early childhood education) may face social stigma and fewer male role models.



Guidance Strategies:

- Use career interest assessments that do not reinforce traditional gender roles.
- Introduce students to diverse [role models](#) who have succeeded in non-traditional fields.
- Encourage exploration of a wide range of professions through internships or mentoring programs.
- Use [Digital Tool for identifying stereotypes in career decisions](#).
- Use The [Co-Creation Model](#).

2. Barriers Created by Gender Stereotypes



Examples:

- Individuals in fields where their gender is underrepresented (e.g., IT, engineering, construction) may face unconscious bias, [fewer mentorship opportunities](#), and slower career progression due to stereotypes about leadership and technical skills.
- Individuals in professions where their gender is underrepresented (e.g., nursing, early childhood education, social work) often experience social stigma, scepticism about their competence, or limited professional support networks.
- [Workplace policies](#), such as insufficient parental leave for fathers or gendered expectations around work-life balance, reinforce traditional roles and discourage individuals from exploring careers outside societal norms.

For more on this topic see Section 2: Gender and External Expectations in Professional Life



Career Guidance Strategies:

- Connect clients with role models and professional networks that support gender diversity in various fields.
- Provide up-to-date labour market information that highlights job opportunities based on skills and demand rather than traditional gender associations.
- Encourage clients to seek out employers with progressive policies, such as equal parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and transparent promotion criteria.



3. Decision-Making Processes and Confidence Gaps

Self-perception and confidence levels often differ between genders due to social conditioning.



Examples:

- Research (Coffman, 2024) shows that some individuals tend to underestimate their abilities and hesitate to apply for jobs unless they meet all listed qualifications, while others apply even if less qualified.
- Men may feel pressured to choose high-paying or leadership-oriented careers, even if their interests lie elsewhere.
- Career breaks (e.g., maternity leave) impact long-term career trajectories, disproportionately affecting women's professional growth



Guidance Strategies:

- Use self-reflection tools to help clients analyse how societal expectations have shaped their career aspirations.
- Offer confidence-building exercises, such as mock interviews or public speaking training.
- Encourage career planning that considers long-term goals, financial stability, and work-life balance.

Your Checklist

- ✓ Are you using gender-neutral language when discussing career options?
- ✓ Do you provide diverse role models for different career paths?
- ✓ Have you addressed unconscious biases in your counselling approach?
- ✓ Do you challenge gender stereotypes when they appear in career discussions?
- ✓ Are you encouraging exploration of non-traditional career paths?





Tools and Resources

1. Self-Reflection Questionnaire: How Has Gender Influenced My Career Decisions?

Objective: Recognize how gender norms have shaped your own career choices.



Instructions:

Read the questions below and answer them honestly. Think about how your family, school, media, and society may have influenced your choices.

1. Childhood Exposure to Careers:

- What careers did you perceive as "suitable" for women/men when you were growing up?
- Were you encouraged to pursue specific career paths as a child? If so, which ones and why?

2. Educational Choices:

- Did teachers or counsellors encourage you toward particular subjects or fields?
- Have you ever avoided a subject or career path because it didn't seem "right for someone like you"?

3. Societal Influences:

- How have media representations shaped your perceptions of gender and work?
- Have you had role models who broke gender norms in their careers?

4. Current Career Aspirations:

- Does your current career choice reflect your true interests, or do you think societal expectations played a role?
- If gender norms didn't exist, would you have made a different career choice?



Reflection: Which of your career-related beliefs come from societal expectations, and which come from your personal interests?



Action: Read more about this in our WP4 module 3: *Detecting gender stereotypes in career decisions*, [chapter 2](#).





2. Role-Playing Exercise: Challenging Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace

Objective: Develop the ability to recognize and address gender biases in career-related situations.



Instructions:

Read and act out with a colleague the scenarios below and then discuss.

1. Job Interview:

- A female candidate applying for a leadership role is asked: "How will you balance family responsibilities with such a demanding job?"
- How should she respond? Would a male candidate be asked the same question?

2. Career Counselling Session:

- A counsellor advises a girl to consider a "secure and stable career" in education but encourages a boy to pursue an "ambitious and dynamic" career in technology.
- How can they express their interest in a different career path?

3. Working in a Non-Traditional Sector:

- A male preschool teacher receives comments from colleagues like: "That's not a typical job for a man!"
- How can he respond confidently to such remarks?



Reflection: How can we challenge gender biases in real-life professional situations?



Action: Read more about this in our WP4 module 2, [chapter 4](#)

3. Checklist: Promoting Gender-Inclusive Career Guidance

Objective: Ensure that your career guidance is free from gender biases and supports individuals in making career choices based on their interests and abilities rather than societal expectations.



Instructions:

Review the checklist below and reflect on your career counselling approach. Identify areas where you can improve gender-sensitive guidance.

- ✓ Do I present career options in a gender-neutral way, avoiding assumptions about "jobs for one gender" versus "jobs for another"?
- ✓ Am I aware of my own potential biases and how they may influence my guidance?
- ✓ Do I encourage all clients to explore a full range of career options, including those in non-traditional fields?
- ✓ Have I provided examples of diverse role models who have succeeded in various professions, regardless of gender?
- ✓ Do I use career interest assessments that do not reinforce traditional gender roles?
- ✓ Am I familiar with current labour market trends, including opportunities in non-traditional career paths for all genders?
- ✓ Do I challenge gendered assumptions when discussing work-life balance, leadership potential, and career advancement?
- ✓ Have I created a supportive space where clients feel comfortable questioning gender norms in their career decision-making?
- ✓ Do I help clients recognize and address potential workplace barriers related to gender, such as bias in hiring, pay gaps, or limited role models?
- ✓ Have I provided resources or networking opportunities to support clients interested in non-traditional career fields?



Reflection: What steps can I take to further integrate gender sensitivity into my career counselling practice?



Action: Read more about this in our WP4 module 5, [chapter 4](#).



GOOD PRACTICE

“Boys Can Do It” - Challenging gender stereotypes in the care professions



Background

Boys' Days is a career guidance initiative developed in Germany and Austria to address the problem of gender segregation in young people's educational and career choices. The method is based on the premise that boys should be given the opportunity to explore feminized professions in a positive and non-stereotypical way. As part of the international Boys in Care project, the Slovenian partner, the Peace Institute, carried out a shortened version of Boys' Days under the title Boys can do it.



Preparation

The preparation of the event involved several steps:

- Schools and nearby educational or social institutions such as kindergartens or retirement homes were selected to participate.
- School counsellors and the management teams of the participating institutions coordinated the schedule and content of the event.
- Boys from the seventh, eighth and ninth grades (aged 12 to 14) who were interested in careers such as educator, nurse or medical technician were invited to participate with the prior consent of their parents.



Organisation of the event

The event was conducted through several activities:

- The event started with a discussion at school about care professions, including the motivations and expectations of the participants.
- The participants visited kindergartens or care homes for the elderly, where they were welcomed by male professionals from these sectors. They watched video presentations, toured the facilities and participated in activities with children or residents.
- The boys had the opportunity to discuss their careers, personal experiences and the challenges of working in a predominantly female environment with male professionals.
- At the end of the event, the participants completed a questionnaire to reflect on their experiences and the professions they had explored.



Results

The feedback from the boys was positive and informative. They acknowledged that care work is very demanding and requires empathy, communication skills and a genuine desire to help others. They also recognized that these professions can be both physically and mentally demanding. The event helped them to see these professions as possible options for all genders.



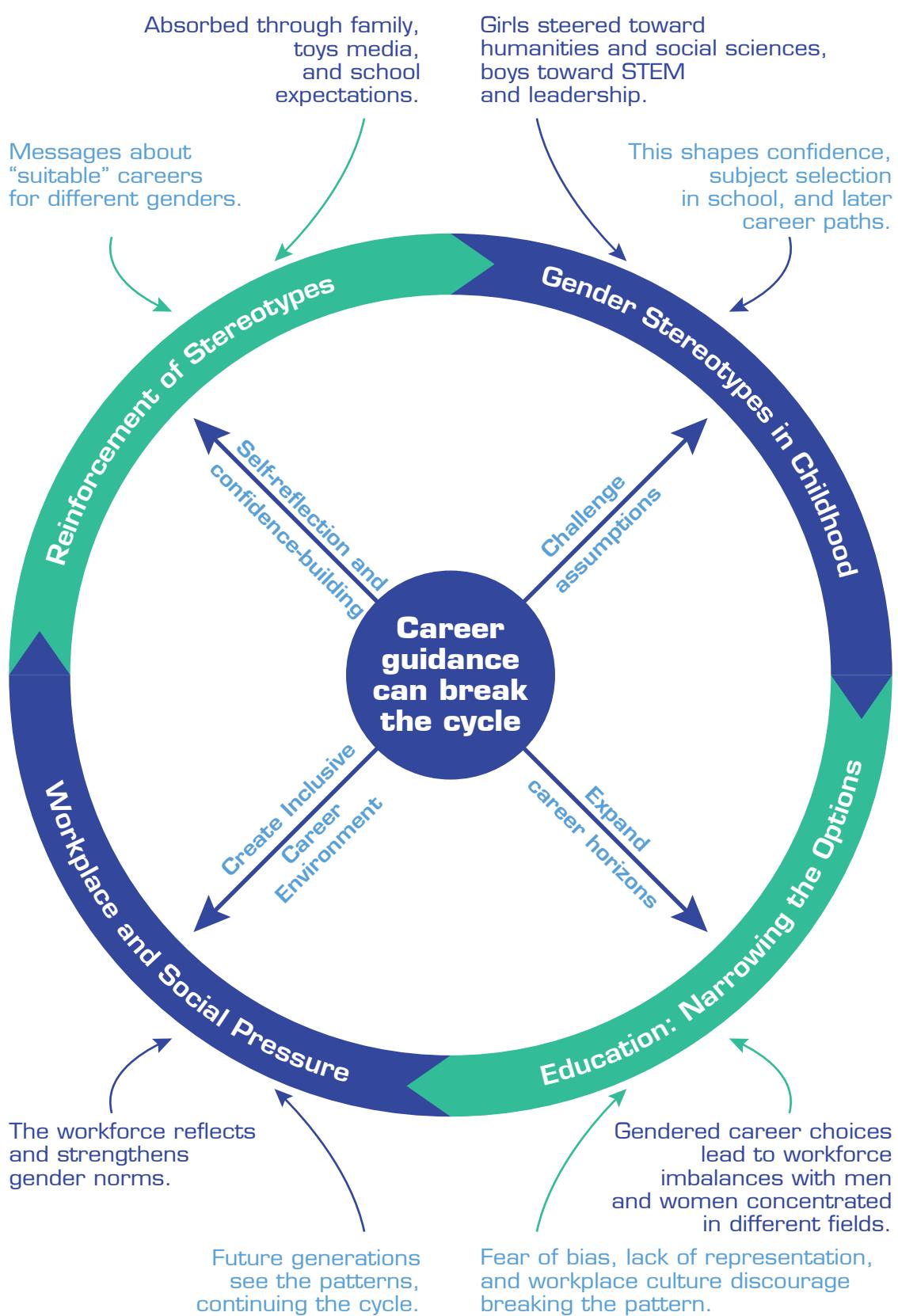
Conclusion

The “Boys Can Do It” event successfully challenged gender stereotypes and offered boys valuable learning experiences in feminized professions. The project underlined the importance of gender-sensitive career guidance and the potential to reposition care professions as gender-neutral, socially valuable occupations.

The study also underlined the importance of male role models in these fields. By interacting with male professionals, the boys were able to learn about their careers, which helped them to understand that it is entirely possible for people of any gender to have a successful career in these professions.



Understanding Gender's Role in Career Guidance





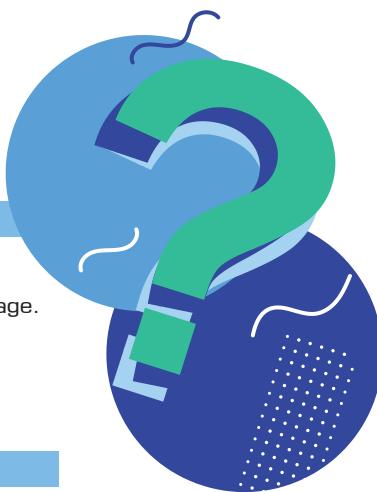
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Quiz

Understanding Gender's Role in Career Guidance



What is one of the key reasons for persistent gender imbalances in the labour market?

- A Men and women naturally prefer different career paths.
- B Societal messages and gender stereotypes influence career aspirations from an early age.
- C Women are less interested in leadership and technical professions.
- D Workplace policies fully support gender equality, so disparities are minimal.

Which of the following is an example of occupational segregation?

- A A workplace where men and women hold similar roles.
- B More women working in education and social work, while more men work in STEM fields.
- C Equal distribution of men and women across all industries.
- D An employer implementing gender-inclusive hiring practices.

Why might a woman hesitate to pursue a career in a male-dominated field?

- A A lack of role models and fear of discrimination.
- B Women are not interested in technical fields.
- C Men perform better in these industries.
- D Women do not have the necessary skills.

What is a common challenge men face when pursuing careers in female-dominated fields?

- A They are always preferred over female candidates.
- B They experience social stigma and skepticism about their competence.
- C They receive more mentorship opportunities than women.
- D There are no challenges; gender does not impact career choices.

Which of the following is NOT an example of a gender-sensitive career guidance strategy?

- A Using gender-neutral language in career discussions.
- B Encouraging both boys and girls to explore a variety of career options.
- C Recommending different career paths based on traditional gender roles.
- D Providing labour market data that highlights opportunities in all fields for all genders.



Section 2

How Societal Gender Norms Influence Career Choices and Professional Confidence

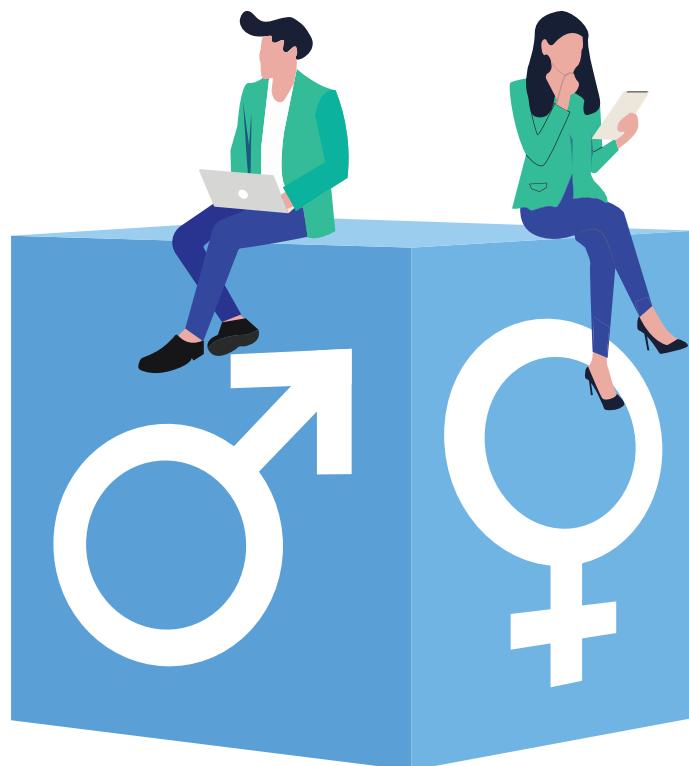
Societal gender norms play a crucial role in shaping individuals' career aspirations and professional confidence. From a young age, societal expectations often dictate which roles are deemed "appropriate" for men and women. For instance, women are frequently discouraged from pursuing careers in STEM fields due to persistent stereotypes within a gender-segregated labor market (Galos & Copock, 2023).

These stereotypes and societal expectations have a significant impact on self-assessment of abilities and career aspirations, especially for women in STEM. Research shows that women tend to anticipate experiencing more negative and fewer positive emotions, alongside a heightened sense of threat, in stereotype-triggering situations (such as being one of the few women in a math course). This emotional response has been linked to lower career aspirations in STEM fields (Schuster & Martiny, 2017).

Self-limiting beliefs, shaped by internalized gender norms, can lead individuals to undervalue their abilities, avoid challenges, and opt for less ambitious career paths. In male-dominated industries, women may feel compelled to adopt a more masculine leadership style, which can conflict with their authentic selves and hinder career progression. Research shows that women in these environments often encounter gender bias and a lack of role models in leadership positions, contributing to feelings of inadequacy (Linehan & Scullion, 2008).

To support students in reflecting on their career choices and understanding how societal gender norms may influence them, the collaboration between counselors and students, utilizing The Co-Creation Dialogue CARDS, offers valuable insights. These cards are designed to foster reflective discussions during counseling sessions, helping counselors guide students in exploring how gender perspectives impact various aspects of career decision-making. This approach helps students identify both the challenges and opportunities they may face in their professional journeys. Engaging with this content allows students to recognize internalized biases and develop strategies to overcome them, leading to a more authentic and fulfilling career path (Tolstrup 2021).

Seeking mentors and building support networks are also essential strategies. Women in male-dominated industries have found that establishing mentorship programs greater inclusion (Woehler, Cullen-Lester, Porter, & Frear, 2021).





Practical Application

Now, let's explore how to apply these concepts in practice using the Co-creating Counselling Model and the Co-creation Dialogue Cards. (Co-creation model and Dialogue Cards [here](#), User manual [here](#)).

The Co-creating Counselling Model serves as a framework for guidance, helping individuals recognize and address how societal gender norms influence career choices. This approach empowers them to challenge self-limiting beliefs, build professional confidence, and expand their career aspirations.

A key factor in this process is the guidance counselor's awareness of their own gender perceptions – both explicit and implicit. To develop this awareness, guidance counselors can engage with the Co-creation Dialogue Cards individually or in groups, gaining insight into their perspectives. This self-reflection is a crucial first step in supporting others as they navigate career decisions influenced by gender norms.

Additionally, the self-reflection tool, introduced in the section below, can be a valuable resource in this context.



Using the model

In the My Life Story field, the counselee can reflect on their understanding of gender and their sense of self-efficacy in relation to it.

As a guidance counselor, you might ask:

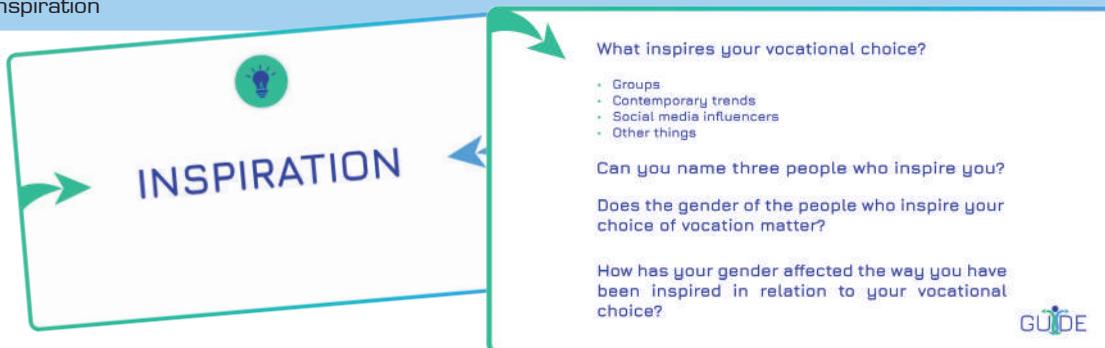
What education and careers have your parents, siblings, or grandparents pursued? How has this influenced you?

What part-time jobs have you held? How did you get them, and how have they shaped your thoughts on career choices?

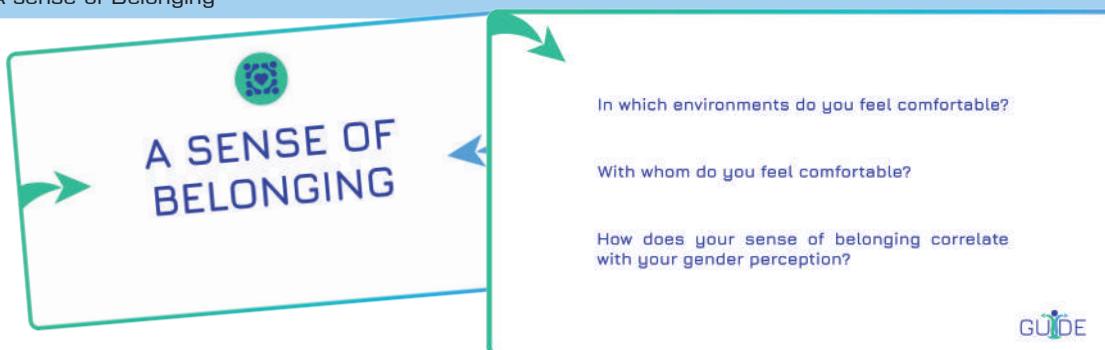
Have you ever worked in or considered a field traditionally associated with the opposite gender?

To facilitate reflection in this area, you can use the following Co-creation Dialogue Cards:

Card 1 – Inspiration

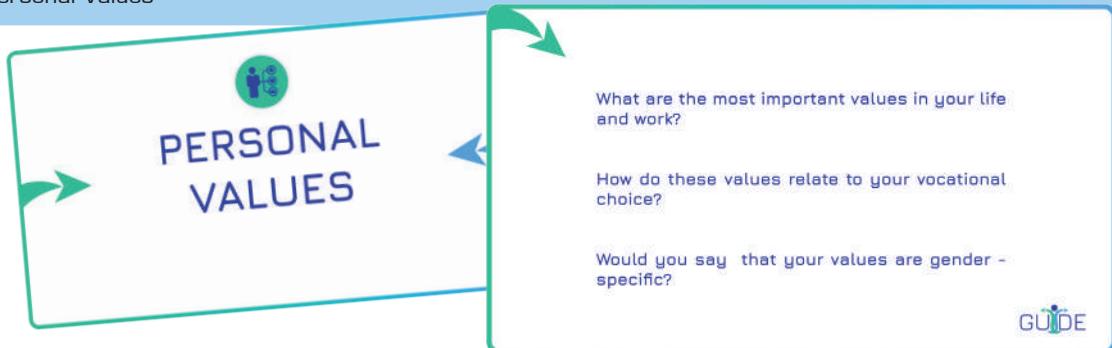


Card 5 – A sense of Belonging

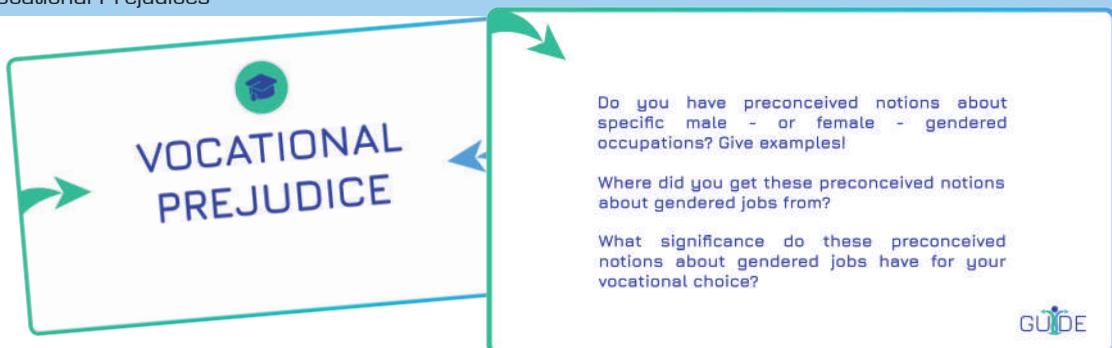




Card 6 – Personal Values



Card 8 – Vocational Prejudices



Place these four cards side by side and invite the individual to select one for reflection. As a guidance counselor, you can then ask follow-up questions, incorporating the ones above to deepen the conversation.

In the **What Do I Want** field, you can help the guided person explore their goals while also examining how gender perceptions may support or hinder them.

As a guidance counselor, encourage reflection on how their career choices align with their authentic self. What values should shape their life? This is an opportunity to challenge self-limiting beliefs and expand their sense of possibility.

In the **What Can I Do** field, you can build on discussions from the What Do I Want field, focusing on factors that either support or limit career choices.

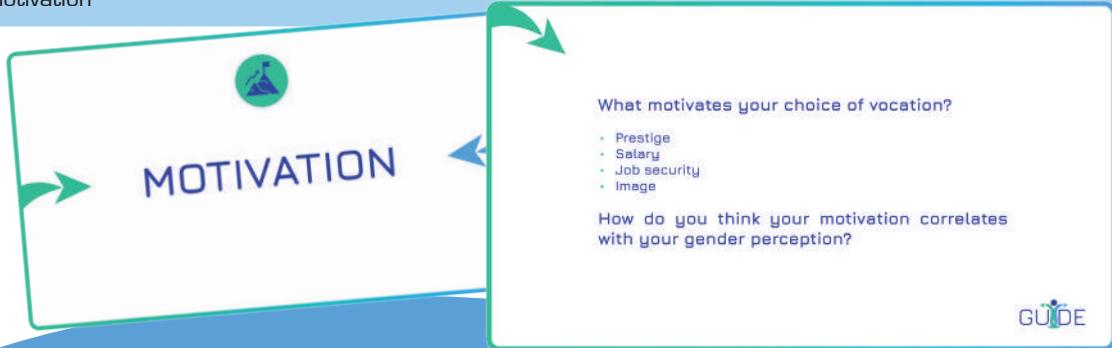
Here, the emphasis is on strengthening the guided person's self-efficacy, particularly in breaking away from conventional career paths and overcoming self-limiting beliefs.

How would you feel working in a workplace where few people share your gender?

What do you think it would be like to work in such an environment?

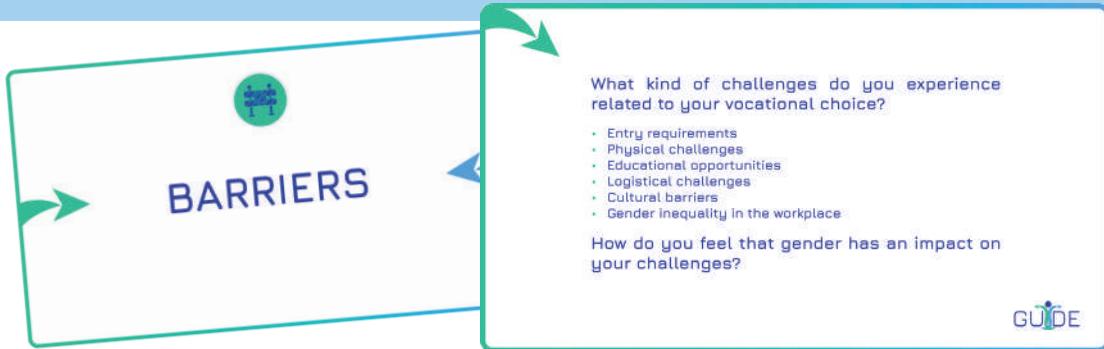
The following Co-creation Dialogue Cards are especially useful in this field:

Card 2 – Motivation

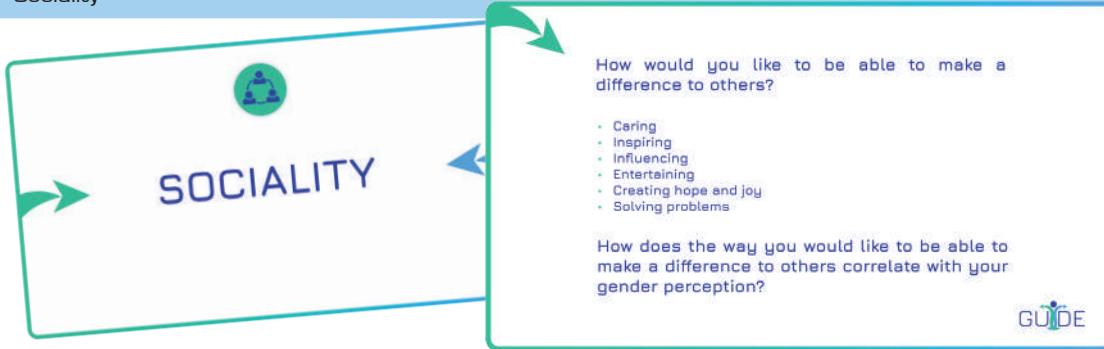




Card 3 – Barriers



Card 4 – Sociality



Card 7 – Selfperception



In the **Is the Goal Realistic** field, you review and assess the discussions so far.

Here, you support the guided person's self-efficacy in confronting gender stereotypes. As a guidance counselor, you can ask:

On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident are you that you will achieve your goal?

On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your resources and competencies to make it happen?

If the responses are not scored relatively high by the guided person, revisit the **What Do I Want** and **What Can I Do** fields to further explore motivation and readiness.

In the **Action Plan** field, the guidance counselor and the guided person collaborate to develop a plan that supports their chosen career path. This process may involve identifying potential obstacles and determining the necessary steps to overcome them.



Tools and Resources

Self-Evaluation Guide for Guidance Counselors

Assessing Competence in Gender-Aware Career Guidance

This self-evaluation guide is inspired by the book *Co-creating Guidance* (Tolstrup, 2022). It can be used individually by a guidance counselor or collaboratively with colleagues.



Purpose

To encourage reflection on practice and enhance the quality of gender-aware guidance.



Self-Reflection Questions

Read the questions below and answer them honestly. Think about how your family, school, media, and society may have influenced your choices.

1. Facilitating Reflection in Career Choices & Gender

- To what extent are you aware of how you create opportunities for reflection on career choices and gender?
- How do you actively integrate this into your guidance?

2. Key Considerations for Effective Gender-Aware Guidance

- Are you aware of your own perceptions of gender and career?
- Do you consciously avoid imposing your own perspectives, ensuring they do not limit the guided person?
- Are you empathetic to the guided person's background and experiences?
- Do you practice active listening and curiosity?
- Do you avoid defining the guided person based on gender norms?
- Do you foster an environment of trust and genuine interest?

3. Raising Awareness of Gender Perceptions

- Did your guidance help the individual recognize their own gender perceptions and their impact on career choices?
- Were gender norms and their influence on career decisions explicitly discussed?
- Did the guided person have the opportunity to reflect on their own perceptions?
- Was the guidance characterized by openness and inclusivity?
- Did the guided person gain a better understanding of their strengths and competencies?

4. Encouraging Responsibility for Career Choices

- To what extent did you support the guided person in taking ownership of their future?
- Did your guidance help them challenge unintentional career limitations based on gender?
- Did you foster belief in their ability to pursue education or careers typically associated with the opposite gender?

This guide serves as a tool to continuously refine gender-aware career guidance practices and ensure meaningful, inclusive career conversations.



GOOD PRACTICE

Thomas is a primary school counselor, and through his involvement with open sources in the current project, he became aware of how his implicit gender perceptions influence his guidance.



For instance, he never suggests caregiving careers to boys or typically male jobs to girls.

To address this, he invites three colleagues to a one-hour reflection session, where they work through the eight reflection cards and use the self-evaluation guide.

Afterward, Thomas completed a group guidance session with five 9th-grade students.

He places a large, A3-sized print of the co-creating model in the center of the table where the students are seated.

They worked through each field, like explained above, one by one, beginning with "My Life Story." Thomas explains that they will be discussing the factors that influence their career choices.

Standing at a fiels a student draws a card that belonged to the specific fiels, and reflected on the question. Thomas encourages everyone to share their thoughts and reflect on one another's responses.

Then another student draw another card, and the process continued.

After having worked with the cards, the students evaluated the process. They said that it had been very interesting, and they had discussed themes that they never had been thinking about before.

Thomas, the counselor, was very pleased with the process. The students had participated with passion, and the reflection had been on a high level.



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Quiz

Understanding Gender's Role in Career Guidance

What is one significant way that societal gender norms impact career choices?

- A They encourage both men and women to pursue the same careers.
- B They create stereotypes that limit certain careers to specific genders.
- C They have no effect on career decisions.

What is a common emotional response for women in STEM fields due to gender stereotypes?

- A Increased motivation and self-confidence.
- B A heightened sense of threat and fewer positive emotions.
- C Complete acceptance of their career choices.

Which of the following is an example of a self-limiting belief caused by gender norms?

- A To reflect on how gender perspectives affect career decision-making.
- B To encourage students to strictly follow traditional career paths.
- C To limit students' career choices based on societal norms.

What is a key benefit of using the Co-Creation Dialogue Cards in career guidance?

- A To avoid discussing gender perceptions during counseling.
- B To be aware of their own gender perceptions, both conscious and unconscious.
- C To only focus on traditional career paths for students



Answers: B, B, A, B



Section 3

Gender and External Expectations in Professional Life

In today's professional world, external expectations rooted in traditional gender roles significantly shape career trajectories. Societal norms and professional stereotypes often dictate what roles individuals are expected or discouraged to pursue. For example, individuals may be subtly steered away from leadership roles, while others might face pressure to conform to assertive and competitive behaviors (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These expectations are deeply embedded in both cultural narratives and organizational practices, influencing decisions from early education to hiring and promotion processes (see section 1).

At the heart of these dynamics is the phenomenon of unconscious bias. Unconscious biases are automatic, deeply ingrained associations that can affect our judgments without us realizing it (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In professional settings, such biases can manifest in subtle ways such as favoring candidates who fit a preconceived mold of leadership, or inadvertently using language that reinforces limiting gender roles. As career counsellors, understanding these biases is critical. Not only do these biases impact individuals' self-perception and confidence, but they also have systemic effects on career advancement, workplace diversity, and organizational culture (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012).

Moreover, external expectations often lead to the development of limiting beliefs. Individuals may internalize negative messages about their potential based on gender, which then influences their career decisions and interactions in the workplace. For example, a young professional might hesitate to pursue a management role due to societal messages that leadership is more "appropriate" for one gender over another (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Our discussion here builds on earlier sections that explore gender-sensitive career guidance. By linking theory with practice, we aim to provide you with insights into how these external pressures can be recognized and countered. The goal is to empower you with strategies to facilitate a more inclusive dialogue during counselling sessions and to help organizations reassess hiring and promotion processes (see section 1).

In summary, recognizing and challenging external gender expectations is essential for creating equitable professional environments. By understanding how these biases form and persist, we can develop strategies to mitigate their effects, promote self-awareness, and foster inclusive professional practices.





Practical Application

One of the most effective ways to counteract gender bias is through unconscious bias training (Bohnet, 2016). Such training helps professionals—especially recruiters, managers, and HR teams—recognize and mitigate implicit stereotypes in decision-making. These sessions often include:

- Implicit Association Tests (IATs) to reveal unconscious biases
- Case studies and role-playing exercises to demonstrate how bias manifests in different fields
- Guidelines for inclusive decision-making, helping individuals pause and evaluate their choices objectively.



Self-Assessment Exercise

Aim: Identifying Biases in Professional Settings

Begin by asking yourself to reflect on personal experiences where gender expectations influenced career decisions.

“When have you felt limited by expectations based on your gender?”

“Can you recall a situation where a hiring decision seemed influenced by gender assumptions?”

Equitable hiring and promotion practices necessitate the implementation of fair and transparent procedures to mitigate biases and promote inclusivity. One such approach is **blind recruitment**, which involves removing identifying information such as names, gender indicators, and photographs from applications. This practice ensures that hiring decisions are based on candidates' skills and qualifications rather than being influenced by unconscious biases (Rivera, 2012). Additionally, **structured interviews**, which standardize questions and evaluation criteria, help minimize subjective biases that may otherwise affect hiring outcomes. Furthermore, the inclusion of **diverse hiring panels**, particularly those that are gender-balanced, fosters fairer candidate assessments and reduces the risk of gendered assumptions influencing hiring decisions (Bohnet, 2016).

Research suggests that gendered language in job descriptions subtly discourages applicants from underrepresented genders (Gaucher et al., 2011). Employers can ensure that job descriptions emphasize skills and competencies rather than stereotypical traits and use gender-neutral pronouns and inclusive messaging to signal openness to diverse candidates.



Inclusive Dialogue Checklist:

Use gender-neutral language (e.g., “individuals” instead of “men/women” when applicable).

Avoid stereotypes in describing roles or behaviors.

Encourage questions that explore individual strengths beyond traditional gender roles.

Validate experiences without reinforcing bias.

Career counselors play a pivotal role in mitigating the impact of gendered societal expectations on career decision-making. By employing targeted interventions, counselors can assist clients in identifying, challenging, and ultimately overcoming these constraints. Three key strategies include career visioning exercises, counter-stereotype exposure, and self-advocacy training.



Career Visioning Exercise

A career visioning exercise encourages clients to conceptualize their ideal careers without the influence of societal gender norms. This reflective practice allows individuals to critically examine the external factors that may have shaped their initial career aspirations (Betz & Hackett, 2006). Research suggests that when individuals engage in unrestricted career exploration, they are more likely to consider a broader range of professional opportunities (Diekman et al., 2010).



Counter-Stereotype Exposure

Introducing clients to professionals who have successfully navigated non-traditional career paths serves as a powerful tool in challenging gender-based occupational stereotypes. Exposure to counter-stereotypical role models has been shown to expand individuals' career self-efficacy and reduce stereotype threat (Bandura, 1997; Stout et al., 2011). This intervention broadens clients' perceptions of their own capabilities and career possibilities.



Self-Advocacy Training

Developing self-advocacy skills is essential for navigating workplace environments where gender biases persist. Training in negotiation, confidence-building, and assertiveness equips clients with the tools necessary to challenge discriminatory practices and advocate for equitable treatment (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). Empirical studies indicate that individuals who receive negotiation training are more likely to achieve favorable employment outcomes, including salary increases and leadership opportunities (Bowles et al., 2005).

Conclusion

Addressing external gender expectations in professional settings requires a multifaceted approach, combining structural changes in organizations with individual empowerment strategies in career counseling. By implementing unbiased hiring practices, fostering self-awareness, and connecting clients with role models, organizations and counselors can actively challenge traditional gender roles and create more equitable career opportunities.



Tools and Resources

Tool 1

How to Use: Mark each statement as **Always**, **Sometimes**, **Rarely**, or **Never** and discuss areas for improvement.

Statement	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Based on unconscious bias training, I think that I may unconsciously associate certain careers with specific genders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I assume women prioritize work-life balance more than men.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Based on unconscious bias training, I think that I may unconsciously encourage men toward leadership roles more than women.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I adjust my career advice based on traditional gender norms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try my counseling approach to be gender-neutral.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Reflection Questions:

1. Did you notice any patterns of bias in your answers?
2. How might these biases influence the advice you give to clients?
3. What actions can you take to ensure a more gender-inclusive approach?

Tool 2

How to Use: Before and after each session, review the following points to ensure gender bias is minimized.

- ✓ **Language** I use gender-neutral language and avoid reinforcing stereotypes.
- ✓ **Career Options** I present career paths equally for all genders, without assumptions.
- ✓ **Client Confidence** I encourage clients to challenge gender-based self-doubt.
- ✓ **Case Studies** I share role models from underrepresented genders in various industries.
- ✓ **Support Systems** I discuss mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.



Tool 3

How to Use: This worksheet should be **completed by clients** before or during counseling sessions to **encourage self-awareness and empowerment**.



Step 1: Imagine Your Ideal Career

- If gender expectations did not exist, what career would you pursue?
- What skills and talents make you well-suited for this career?
- What challenges have you faced based on gender norms?



Step 2: Overcoming Gender Barriers

- What external expectations have influenced your career decisions?
- How can you challenge these expectations?
- What mentors or role models can help you in this journey?

Tool 4

How to Use: This worksheet should be used **at the end of a session** to help clients **identify and overcome self-doubt** related to gender-based career stereotypes.



Step 1: Identify Your Strengths

List **five skills or qualities** that make you a strong candidate for your desired career.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.



Step 2: Challenge Negative Thoughts

Write down **one negative belief** you have about pursuing your career based on gender stereotypes and reframe it.

1.
2.



Effects:

During counselling, clients:

- ✓ Imagined their **ideal careers** without societal constraints
- ✓ Identified **gender-based fears or doubts** about their chosen field
- ✓ Created a **personal action plan** for overcoming barriers



GOOD PRACTICE

Case Study: Counter-Stereotype Exposure in Career Counseling



Background: Anna, a 17-year-old high school student, has always excelled in mathematics and science but believes that engineering is a “male-dominated” field where she might struggle to fit in. Her parents and teachers have encouraged her to consider engineering due to her strong analytical skills, but she remains hesitant, citing a lack of female role models in the field.

Intervention: Anna’s school counselor, aware of the impact of counter-stereotype exposure, arranges for her to meet Dr. Maria Kowalski, a successful female mechanical engineer who has worked on major infrastructure projects. Dr. Kowalski shares her experiences, the challenges she faced, and how she overcame them. She highlights the growing presence of women in engineering and the various initiatives supporting gender diversity in STEM fields.

Additionally, Anna is invited to participate in a mentorship program where she meets other women in engineering through virtual networking events and site visits to tech companies with diverse workforces. This continued exposure helps Anna see engineering as a realistic and welcoming career path for herself.

Outcome: Following her interactions with Dr. Kowalski and other female engineers, Anna’s confidence in pursuing an engineering career grows. She applies to a competitive engineering program and secures an internship at a technology firm that promotes inclusivity. Her career self-efficacy increases, and she no longer views engineering as an unattainable or gender-restricted field.

Implications: Anna’s case highlights the effectiveness of counter-stereotype exposure in breaking down gender-based occupational stereotypes. Providing individuals with access to diverse role models broadens career perceptions, reduces stereotype threat, and enhances self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Stout et al., 2011). Career counselors and educators can implement similar interventions to promote equitable career choices for all students.



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Quiz

Identifying and Challenging Gender Bias in Professional Settings

Which of the following best describes unconscious bias?

- A A deliberate form of discrimination based on gender
- B An automatic and ingrained association that affects judgment without awareness
- C A bias that only exists in certain professions
- D A conscious decision to favor one gender over another

What is one of the key ways organizations can reduce bias in hiring?

- A Avoiding structured interviews to allow for more flexible assessments
- B Allowing hiring managers to select candidates based on intuition
- C Prioritizing candidates who fit traditional leadership traits
- D Implementing blind recruitment to remove identifying information

True or False: Gendered language in job descriptions can discourage certain applicants.

- A True
- B False

What is the primary goal of self-advocacy training?

- A To ensure individuals conform to traditional career expectations
- B To encourage employees to accept workplace biases
- C To equip individuals with skills in negotiation, confidence-building, and assertiveness
- D To eliminate all forms of bias overnight

Which of the following is NOT a strategy for reducing gender bias in career decision-making?

- A Encouraging individuals to adhere to traditional career paths
- B Counter-stereotype exposure to role models in non-traditional fields
- C Career visioning exercises that challenge societal expectations
- D Training in self-advocacy and negotiation skills

True or False: Unconscious bias only affects individual decisions, not systemic workplace policies.

- A True
- B False

What is a major benefit of using structured interviews in recruitment?

- A They help ensure only one gender is selected for leadership positions
- B They allow hiring managers to make spontaneous decisions
- C They standardize evaluation criteria and reduce subjective biases
- D They increase reliance on personal connections rather than qualifications



**How can career counselors help clients navigate gender biases in the workplace?**

- A Encouraging clients to avoid leadership roles to prevent bias exposure
- B Providing training in negotiation and confidence-building skills
- C Steering clients towards careers traditionally associated with their gender
- D Advising clients to ignore workplace bias as it is inevitable

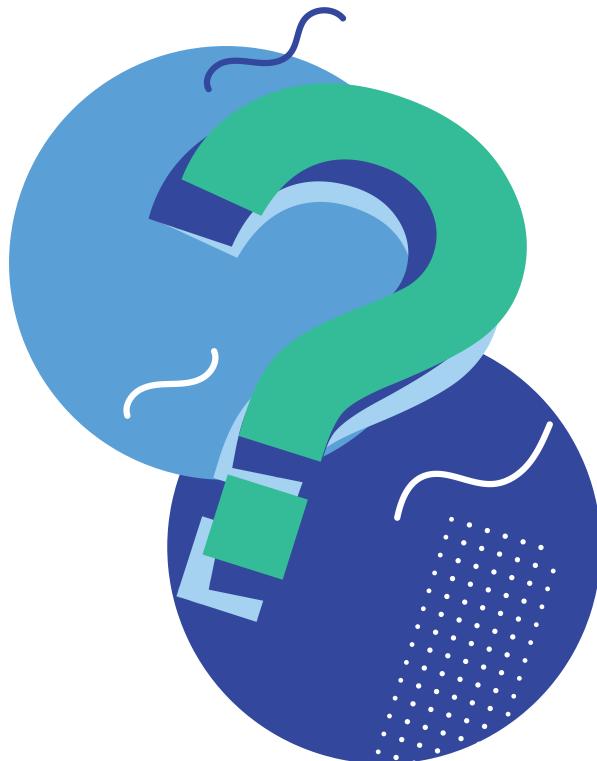
True or False: Exposure to professionals in non-traditional career paths can increase career self-efficacy.

- A True
- B False

What is an example of an inclusive dialogue practice?

- A Using gender-neutral language in discussions and job descriptions
- B Reinforcing traditional gender roles in career counseling
- C Encouraging clients to accept gender biases as part of professional life
- D Avoiding conversations about bias to prevent discomfort

Answers: B, D, A, C, A, B, C, B, A, A





Section 4

Knowledge, Skills, and Values for Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance

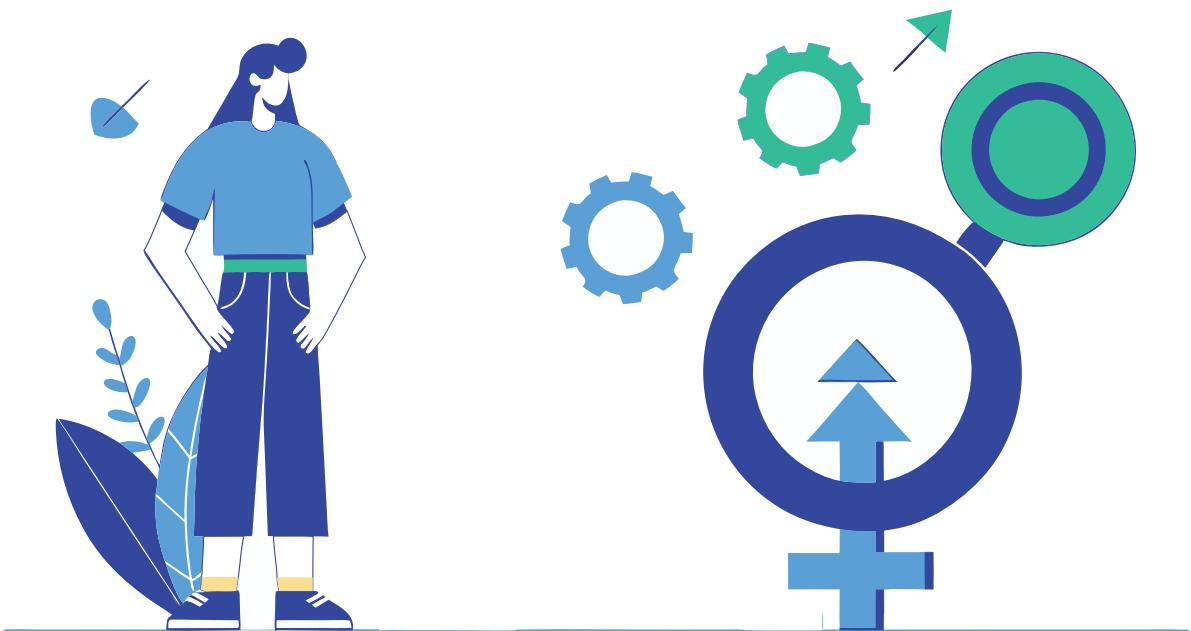
Academics and career counselling and guidance professionals must do their utmost to demonstrate that, with sensitivity and up-to-date tools, they can effectively support individuals, organisations and different contexts. According to the authors Nota & Soresi, (2017), they define 'Professional Counselling' as a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to achieve mental health, well-being, education and career goals.

According to the studies of Serbova et al. (2022), which present a model of gender sensitivity training in career counselling, it emphasises the development of knowledge, skills and values that promote gender equality. Key components include understanding gender stereotypes, promoting awareness of non-discriminatory practices and encouraging informed career choices. Skills involve effective communication and collaboration with specialist organisations that support gender equality. Values focus on respect, inclusion and the importance of creating a favourable educational environment that empowers all students, regardless of gender, to explore their potential freely.

Gender disparities in STEM fields have long prevented equal opportunities for women, limiting their participation and contributions to the global workforce. Despite growing global awareness of the need for gender parity in STEM, significant disparities persist. This imbalance is often influenced by socio-cultural norms that limit female participation in scientific and technical fields (Iloakasia, 2024). We know that this gender gap in STEM is driven

more by prejudice than by ability (Luyckx et al., 2023). Career counsellors in schools have the potential to dispel myths about the difficulty of STEM subjects and encourage female students to see them as viable career options (Syeda & Zahid, 2024).

Although a large part of gender equality policies rightly focuses on promoting female participation in traditionally male-dominated areas, it is equally important to recognise the sectors where men are under-represented. Professions such as pre-school and primary education, nursing, social work and psychology continue to have a significant female predominance. For example, in the European Union, less than 3% of pre-school teachers are men (Eurostat, 2021), and the proportion of men in nursing rarely exceeds 15% (OECD, 2022). This unequal distribution reflects not only personal preferences, but also cultural norms and gender stereotypes that associate these professions with 'care work', traditionally attributed to women. Tackling this reality requires the development of inclusive strategies by career guidance systems that encourage young men to explore these careers and combat the associated stigma. Gender diversity in these sectors can contribute to more balanced working environments and a more comprehensive response to society's needs. Areas such as social work, community support and family intervention are also occupied largely by women. Men can face gender stereotypes when entering these careers, especially those related to emotional care (Crompton, R., 2006). This gender disparity can also be seen in the Clinical Psychology, Speech Therapy and Psych pedagogy courses, where the majority of students and professionals are female (EFPA, 2020).





Practical Application

Gender-sensitive career guidance is an approach that promotes equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender, by addressing stereotypes, prejudices and structural barriers. It helps individuals make career choices based on their abilities, interests and aspirations, rather than social expectations. To acquire knowledge, skills and values for gender-sensitive career guidance, we have listed below some examples of practical application, for educational institutions or career guidance institutes to achieve equal opportunities in career guidance, such as:



Training Career Counsellors & Educators

Educate counsellors on unconscious biases and how they affect career guidance.

- Provide workshops on gender-inclusive language and behaviour.
- Equip them with resources to guide students and job seekers effectively.

Training programs should be addressed to placement managers with focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training for recruitment teams, promoting open conversations throughout the year for all employees, and implementing for example reverse mentorship.



Providing Gender-Neutral Career Resources

- Use inclusive images and language in career brochures, job advertisements, and educational materials.
- Highlight diverse role models from different career fields.
- Offer career exploration tools that focus on skills and interests rather than gender norms.



Encouraging Non-Traditional Career Paths

- Organize career fairs with professionals from diverse fields.
- Promote success stories of individuals who broke gender barriers in their professions.
- Create mentorship programs where underrepresented genders are paired with role models in non-traditional fields.



Collaborating with Industry & Employers

- Partner with companies to promote inclusive hiring practices.
- Encourage businesses to provide equal opportunities for career growth and leadership roles.
- Advocate for workplace policies that support work-life balance and gender equality.



Addressing Societal & Cultural Barriers

- Engage parents, teachers, and communities in discussions about gender equality in career choices.
- Promote gender-sensitive policies in schools and workplaces.
- Use media campaigns to challenge stereotypes and highlight career diversity.

To inspire and demonstrate how these practices can be applied, we have listed several initiatives that avoid gender bias.

1 Black Girls Code (USA): A nonprofit dedicated to increasing the number of Black girls in technology (Mobile app development; Game design and virtual reality workshops; Community-based hackathons) by providing free coding workshops and mentorship.

Website: <https://www.blackgirlscode.com/>

2 Million Women Mentors (USA & Global): A mentoring movement that connects professional women in STEM with girls interested in STEM careers, by promoting One-on-one mentoring programs and corporate partnerships to encourage diversity in STEM.

Website: <https://www.millionwomenmentors.com/>



3 Girls in ICT Day (Global - ITU Initiative): A global initiative that encourages girls to explore careers in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This program includes activities like Workshops on coding, cybersecurity, and Networking with women professionals in tech.

Website: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Women-and-Girls/Girls-in-ICT-Portal/Pages/default.aspx>

4 Boys in Care (BiC): dedicated to boys and parents, primary and secondary school teachers, vocational counsellors, specialists (youth workers, youth workers, social workers) who support boys in atypical educational and vocational choices.

Website: <https://www.boys-in-care.eu/>

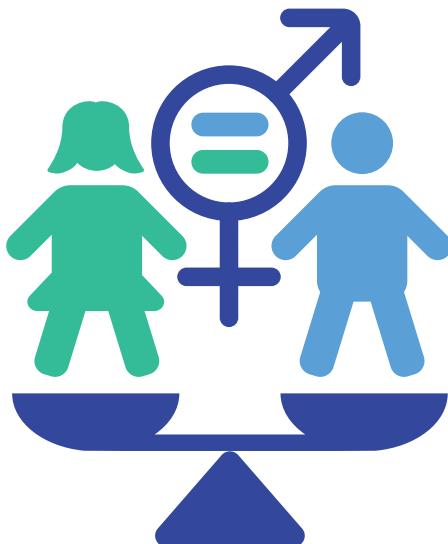
There are also some programs to promote Diversity in Apprenticeships with the involvement of Government and corporate programs to support women in trades like construction and engineering, for example:

5 Women in Apprenticeships Fund (Canada): funding initiative that helps employers hire and support women in male-dominated skilled trades through pre-apprenticeship training and mentorship. The main aims are: Financial incentives for businesses hiring female apprentices; skills training programs for women in construction, welding, and engineering with mentorship and networking support.

Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/apprentices.html>

6 NAWIC Tradeswomen Apprenticeship Programs (USA & International): Helps women enter the construction industry through hands-on apprenticeship training, like training in carpentry, electrical work, and plumbing; Scholarships and funding for women in apprenticeships; Networking events with industry leaders.

Website: <https://www.nawic.org/>





Tools and Resources

In this section, we try to identify several tools that help to identify career interests and skills while addressing gender biases in career choices. These tools are organized into six main classes: 1. Gender-Sensitive Career Assessment Tools; 2. Gender Bias Detection & Training Tools; 3. Digital Platforms for Women in STEM & Non-Traditional Careers; 4. Gender-Inclusive Career Counseling Training; 5. Mentorship & Networking Tools for Gender Diversity; 6. Gender-Sensitive Job Search & Career Development Platforms.

1. Gender-Sensitive Career Assessment Tools

- MyFuture (Australia): An interactive career exploration tool that provides gender-neutral career recommendations. Website: <https://myfuture.edu.au>
- O*NET Interest Profiler (USA - Department of Labor): A free tool that helps individuals explore careers based on their interests, with a focus on reducing gender bias. Website: <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>

2. Gender Bias Detection & Training Tools: These tools help organizations and educators recognize and address gender bias in career guidance.

- Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT): Measures unconscious gender biases in career perceptions.
Website: <https://implicit.harvard.edu>
- UNESCO Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM): A guide for assessing and eliminating gender bias in career-related media and publications.
Website: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report>

3. Digital Platforms for Women in STEM & Non-Traditional Careers: These platforms encourage women to explore careers in STEM and male-dominated industries.

- WISE (UK – Women in Science and Engineering): Provides tools for schools, colleges, and businesses to encourage women in STEM careers. Website: <https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk>
- Career Girls (Global): A free online platform offering videos and career resources featuring diverse women professionals. Website: <https://www.careergirls.org>

4. Gender-Inclusive Career Counseling Training: these resources help career advisors integrate gender-sensitive approaches.

- ILO Toolkit on Gender and Career Guidance (International Labour Organization): A step-by-step guide to providing gender-inclusive career guidance. Website: <https://www.ilo.org/global/publications>

5. Mentorship & Networking Tools for Gender Diversity: These platforms provide mentorship opportunities for women and marginalized genders.

- Million Women Mentors (Global): A movement connecting female professionals with mentors in STEM fields. Website: <https://www.millionwomenmentors.com>
- Lean In Circles (Global): A peer mentoring platform promoting leadership skills for women. Website: <https://leanin.org/circles>



6. Gender-Sensitive Job Search & Career Development Platforms: These platforms focus on diversity-friendly employers.

- Equalture (Europe): A recruitment platform using bias-free assessment tools for hiring. Website: <https://www.equalture.com>
- Fairygodboss (USA & Global): A job search site offering company reviews based on workplace gender inclusivity. Website: <https://fairygodboss.com>

7. Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023:

- Based on key provisions of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*, the Toolkit focuses on institutionalising gender equality and gender mainstreaming; developing and sustaining gender mainstreaming capacity; integrating gender considerations into various dimensions of public governance; establishing inclusive accountability structures; and supporting gender balance in all state institutions (executive, legislative, and judiciary) and structures and at all levels. Website: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/toolkit-for-mainstreaming-and-implementing-gender-equality-2023_3ddef555-en.html





GOOD PRACTICE



To promote gender-sensitive career guidance, it is essential to consider case studies and exemplary practices that address the issue effectively. Below are some relevant examples:



1 Female Training and Empowerment in Senior Management Positions:

The article 'Maestrias para romper el techo de cristal' highlights initiatives such as the 'Promociona' programme, which aims to train women for leadership positions. This programme combines training, capacity building and networking, helping participants to overcome structural and psychological barriers, such as the lack of female references in senior positions and the 'imposter syndrome'. The experience of Sara Pastor Bonvas, who after taking part in the programme took on a leadership role at streaming platform DAZN, exemplifies the positive impact of these initiatives.

Website: https://elpais.com/extra/formacion/2024-09-08/maestrias-para-romper-el-techo-de-cristal.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com



2 Good Organisational Practices in Gender Equality:

The iGen Forum's 'Compendium for Good Practices in Gender Equality' brings together innovative measures by various organisations to promote gender equality in the workplace. The practices cover areas such as recruitment, ongoing training, fair pay and work-life balance. This compendium serves as a reference for organisations looking to develop inclusive and gender-sensitive policies.

Website: https://forumigen.cite.gov.pt/compendio-para-as-boas-praticas-em-igualdade-de-genero/?utm_source=chatgpt.com



3 Training Health Professionals on Sexual and Gender Diversity:

The study 'Social representations of nurses on sexual orientation and gender identity' analyses nurses' attitudes and knowledge in relation to sexual and gender diversity. The results indicate the need for specific training for these professionals to improve the provision of care to LGBTQ+ people. Inclusion of themes.

Website: https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/bitstream/10071/22139/4/master_fernando_silva_gomes.pdf



4 STEM for All' programme (Peru, 2025):

Immersion programme in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics for future Leaders.

Organised by: Technological University of Peru

Background: The project seeks to encourage the participation of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers, traditionally dominated by men.

Approach: Career guidance workshops, mentoring with professionals in the field and deconstruction of gender stereotypes from basic education onwards.

Results: Increased female interest in STEM courses and careers, contributing to greater diversity in these areas.

Website: <https://www.stemparatodas.net/>

5 'Gender Equality in Vocational Education' (Sweden, 2021)

Context: Sweden implemented a training programme for careers advisors, with a focus on eliminating unconscious biases in profession recommendations.

Approach: Training on gender stereotypes, inclusion workshops and analysis of teaching materials to ensure gender neutrality.

Results: Reduction in the influence of prejudices in career guidance and greater diversity in the choice of technical and university courses.



6 'Women in the Technology Labour Market' (USA, 2020):

Context: Large technology companies realised that low female representation was related to a lack of encouragement in the career guidance phase.

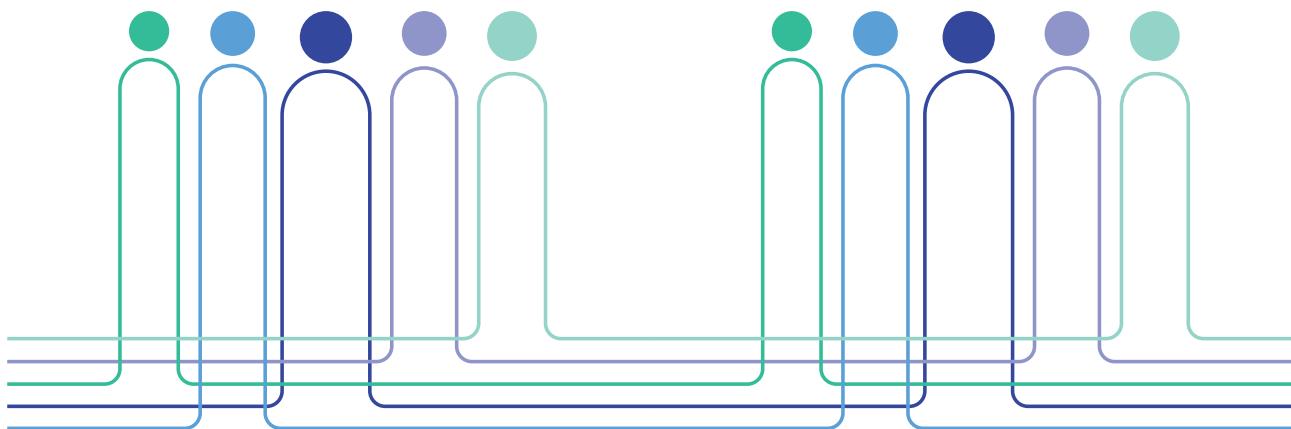
Approach: Implementation of female mentoring, inclusive recruitment policies and campaigns to attract women to technology.

Results: Increase in the hiring of women for technical areas and improvement of the corporate environment for gender diversity.



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Quiz

Knowledge, Skills, and Values for Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance

Why is it important to consider gender sensitivity in career guidance?

- A To encourage differences between men and women in the labour market.
- B To ensure that all people have equal career opportunities and choices based on their abilities and interests.
- C To direct men and women towards professions related to their gender.
- D Because legislation obliges the application of these intermediaries.

Which of the following practices contribute to career guidance without gender bias?

- A Offering the same opportunities to everyone, without pressuring their choices.
- B Reinforcing that some professions are more specific to certain genders.
- C Using only male role models when talking about technology and engineering careers.
- D Encourage only women to pursue careers in care and education.

What does 'unconscious bias' mean in career counselling?

- A A decision made based on an objective analysis of candidates' abilities.
- B A tendency to unknowingly associate certain roles or professions with a specific gender.
- C An effective method for ensuring that each person chooses a profession suited to their gender.
- D A type of conscious prejudice used to exclude certain groups.

How can counsellors avoid promoting gender stereotypes?

- A Presenting a variety of successful role models of different genders in all fields.
- B Limiting career options to align with social expectations.
- C Avoiding discussing gender during career counselling.
- D Directing people to areas where their gender is more predominant.

Which of these statements best defines an inclusive approach to career guidance?

- A 'Men are naturally more suited to technical areas, and women to social areas'.
- B Every career choice should be based on individual talent and interest, without the influence of stereotypes.
- C The labour market is already balanced in terms of gender, so there's no need to worry'.
- D Women should only be encouraged for administrative tasks.

What does it mean to promote values of equity in career counselling?

- A Offering differentiated support for each person, considering the structural barriers that can affect their choices.
- B Applying the same rules to everyone, without considering social and historical contexts.
- C Advising careers based on what the traditional market expects from each gender.
- D Directing each person towards professions historically dominated by their gender.





Section 5

Gender-Sensitive Career Designing Competences

Gender-sensitive career designing ensures that students make choices based on their abilities and interests rather than societal expectations. Section 1 provides an insight on how gender biases persist in career counseling, subtly shaping students' aspirations. These biases affect not only career decisions but also the self-confidence of students exploring non-traditional career paths.

To counteract these biases, the focus should be on:

- Recognizing and addressing unconscious biases in career counseling.
- Challenging stereotypical career expectations through active discussion and media analysis.
- Promoting equitable access to career resources and opportunities for all students.
- Encouraging mentorship and representation of diverse role models in various professions.

Multimedia resources such as short videos and podcasts can enhance engagement and support different learning preferences, providing dynamic ways to explore career opportunities beyond traditional gender norms.

Global efforts, such as STEM mentorship programs for girls and initiatives promoting male participation in caregiving professions, highlight the importance of structured career guidance that is free from gender constraints. Career counseling practices should be proactive in questioning assumptions and integrating gender-neutral assessment tools.

Practical Application

Career counselors can implement gender-sensitive career planning using a structured, **step-by-step approach**:

Step 1: Initial Career Exploration

- Use gender-neutral **career interest assessments** (e.g., O*NET Interest Profiler, MyFuture Australia).
- Ask students to identify their **career aspirations and motivations**, reflecting on whether gender norms have influenced their choices.
- Conduct a **Gender Awareness Quiz** to challenge stereotypes.

Step 2: Identifying and Addressing Gender Bias

- Facilitate **group discussions** on how gender influences career expectations.
- Introduce **success stories** of individuals in non-traditional roles.
- Use **role-playing exercises** to help students recognize and counter gender biases.

Step 3: Exposure to Diverse Career Pathways

- Organize **mentorship programs** pairing students with professionals from underrepresented genders in various fields.
- Plan **career fairs** featuring speakers from diverse industries.
- Develop a **career exploration toolkit** showcasing gender-diverse role models.

Step 4: Personalized Career Action Planning

- Use a **career planning worksheet** to outline steps for achieving career goals.
- Encourage students to **set long-term and short-term objectives** based on their strengths and aspirations.
- Provide a **career mapping template** to visually track their professional journey.



Tools and Resources

To support gender-sensitive career designing, below are categorized tools that career counselors can integrate into their practice:

1. Gender-Sensitive Career Assessment Tools

- **O*NET Interest Profiler (USA):** Free tool for exploring careers based on interests, designed to minimize gender bias. [Website](#)
- **MyFuture (Australia):** A career exploration tool providing gender-neutral recommendations. [Website](#)

2. Gender Bias Detection & Training Tools

- **Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT):** Measures unconscious gender biases in career perceptions. [Website](#)
- **UNESCO Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Career Media:** Helps identify and reduce gender bias in career-related materials. [Website](#)

3. Digital Platforms Supporting Gender-Inclusive Career Paths

- **Career Girls (Global):** Free online platform with videos featuring diverse women professionals. [Website](#)
- **UWise (UK – Women in Science and Engineering):** Provides career guidance materials to encourage women in STEM. [Website](#)

4. Gender-Inclusive Career Counseling Training Resources

- **ILO Toolkit on Gender and Career Guidance:** A guide to providing gender-sensitive career counseling. [Website](#)
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Training for Counselors:** Programs designed to help professionals integrate gender-aware guidance.

5. Mentorship & Networking Tools for Gender Diversity

- **Million Women Mentors (Global):** A movement connecting professional women in STEM with girls interested in STEM careers. [Website](#)
- **Lean In Circles (Global):** Peer mentoring platform promoting leadership skills for women. [Website](#)

6. Gender-Sensitive Job Search & Career Development Platforms

- **Fairygodboss (USA & Global):** Job search site with company reviews based on workplace gender inclusivity. [Website](#)
- **Equalture (Europe):** Recruitment platform using bias-free assessment tools for hiring. [Website](#)



GOOD PRACTICE

To promote gender-sensitive career guidance, it is essential to consider case studies and exemplary practices that address the issue effectively. Below are some relevant examples:

1 Gender-Neutral Career Counseling Framework in Schools

Context: Schools in Denmark implemented a structured gender-neutral career counseling program.

Approach:

- Career counselors were trained in **gender bias awareness** and **inclusive language**.
- A **career toolkit** with non-gendered role models was introduced.
- **Workshops** on overcoming career stereotypes were delivered to students.

Outcome: Increased diversity in career choices, with more girls entering STEM fields and more boys considering caregiving professions.

2 STEM for All Initiative – Bridging the Gender Gap

Context: A European-funded initiative aimed at increasing female participation in STEM careers.

Approach:

- **School-based interventions** with female STEM professionals providing mentorship.
- **Scholarship programs** for young women in engineering and IT fields.
- **Awareness campaigns** targeting parents and educators.

Outcome: Higher enrollment of women in STEM programs and greater visibility of female professionals in traditionally male-dominated fields.

3 Encouraging Men into Health and Social Care Careers

Context: A national campaign in Sweden aimed at increasing male participation in nursing and education.

Approach:

- **Male mentorship networks** connecting young men with professionals in the field.
- **Advertising campaigns** showcasing men in caregiving roles.
- **Financial incentives** for male students pursuing degrees in health and social care.

Outcome: Improved gender diversity in nursing and education programs, contributing to a more balanced workforce.

These case studies and practices show how career guidance can be more equitable and gender-sensitive, guaranteeing fair opportunities for all individuals.

To support diverse learning styles, career counselors can use:



Podcasts:

- *Breaking Barriers*: Stories of professionals defying gender norms. This podcast celebrates entrepreneurs and motivated individuals who have overcome challenges, sharing their journeys to inspire others - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/breaking-barriers/id1399123538>
- *STEM Without Limits*: Women and minorities in science and technology.



Videos:

- *TED Talk: Gender Stereotypes in Careers* – Exploring gender bias in career planning. In this talk, Leah Sheppard explores how societal expectations limit career choices and offers insights on overcoming these biases. [Watch](#)
- *Non-Traditional Career Paths* – Profiles of individuals in diverse careers. This video profiles individuals who have pursued diverse careers, breaking away from traditional gender roles. [Watch](#)



Interactive Webinars:

- **Career Without Limits** – Sessions on gender-free career planning. <https://careerplanningacademy.com/>
- **Diversity in the Workforce** – Discussions on inclusive hiring practices. <https://inclusionforum.global/~package~3/webinars/diverse-and-inclusive-hiring-practices-for-your-organization-9/>



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Quiz

Gender-Sensitive Career Designing Competences

Why is gender-sensitive career designing important?

- A It ensures career choices are based on skills and interests rather than stereotypes.
- B It directs men and women to traditional gender roles.
- C It discourages career exploration.
- D It promotes gender-exclusive professions.

Which of the following contributes to gender bias in career counseling?

- A Encouraging students to explore various careers without gendered expectations.
- B Using only male role models in STEM career talks.
- C Offering mentorship opportunities to all students equally.
- D Highlighting diverse career pathways for both genders.

What is a key method to reduce gender bias in career counseling?

- A Avoiding discussion of gender altogether.
- B Promoting inclusive career guidance and diverse role models.
- C Assigning career options based on gender history.
- D Reinforcing traditional career roles.

How can career counselors help students overcome gender biases in career choices?

- A By providing access to diverse role models and mentorship.
- B By suggesting careers based on gender norms.
- C By discouraging students from exploring non-traditional fields.
- D By restricting career options to established paths.

Which of the following is a gender-sensitive career counseling practice?

- A Using career exploration tools that assess skills and interests neutrally.
- B Advising students to choose careers based on traditional gender expectations.
- C Ignoring gender biases in job recruitment.
- D Encouraging students to only follow high-paying career paths.

What is an effective way to promote gender-sensitive career counseling in schools?

- A Providing professional development training for career counselors on gender bias.
- B Limiting career guidance sessions to traditional career options.
- C Using only historical career data to guide students.
- D Encouraging students to follow gender norms when choosing a career.





Section 6

Good Practices on Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance

Good practices on gender-sensitive career guidance (GSCG) refer to methods and approaches recognised as effective in ensuring that career guidance considers gender-specific challenges, barriers, and preconceptions. These practices aim to help people of all genders make career choices that are not restricted by gender stereotypes.

As a career counsellor, it is crucial to recognise and challenge the gender norms that influence career decisions. Gender-sensitive career guidance focuses on identifying stereotypes, creating an inclusive environment, and encouraging diversity in career choices. This ensures that individuals are free to explore careers based on their strengths and interests rather than being limited by traditional gender expectations.

One key aspect of good practice in GSCG is identifying and addressing gender stereotypes that may influence career choices. These stereotypes can often restrict individuals from pursuing careers that are traditionally seen as being "for men" or "for women." To help with this, we've provided a [digital tool](#) that allows you to identify explicit gender stereotypes/biases in career choices. You can use this tool in your counselling sessions to help individuals reflect on how these stereotypes might be influencing their decisions.

A key part of gender-sensitive career guidance is actively encouraging individuals to consider a wide range of career options, regardless of traditional gender roles. By promoting diverse career paths, you help people expand their horizons and challenge the limitations imposed by gender stereotypes. This can be achieved through exercises, discussions, and reflection tools that allow individuals to explore career options they may not have previously considered.

To further explore how to encourage diverse career choices, we've created the "[Co-creation Model](#)", which provides a structured framework for reflection exercises. These can be used to guide individuals in considering career paths that might challenge traditional gender norms.

Good practices in GSCG also include ensuring that career counsellors are trained to understand and address gender perspectives. This training helps you offer objective, unbiased guidance and support individuals in making career decisions that align with their interests and strengths.

If you're looking to improve your skills in delivering gender-sensitive career guidance, our [training program](#) is a great resource. It provides a comprehensive approach to understanding gender perspectives and offers support that is inclusive and unbiased.

In summary, good practices on gender-sensitive career guidance are about ensuring that career counselling is fair, inclusive, and free from gender-based discrimination. By identifying and addressing gender stereotypes, creating an inclusive environment, encouraging diverse career choices, using gender-neutral materials, and providing training for career guidance professionals, you can help individuals make informed career decisions without being limited by traditional gender expectations.

We recommend exploring the following: [Digital Tool for identifying stereotypes in career decisions](#), [The Co-Creation Model](#), and the [Online Training Programme in Gender Sensitive Career Guidance](#) to deepen your understanding and apply these practices effectively.

You can also explore the sections of this toolkit on "Knowledge, Skills, and Values for Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance" and "Gender-Sensitive Career Designing Competences" for practical strategies and training programs.





Practical Application

Inclusive Career Guidance Environment Checklist

Creating an inclusive environment in career guidance is essential to ensure that all individuals feel welcome and can explore their career options without being influenced by gender stereotypes. This checklist will help you assess and improve your practice to make guidance more inclusive.



Physical Environment

- Neutral and diverse imagery: Ensure that posters, brochures, and other materials in your guidance space feature people of all genders in a wide range of professions e.g., men in nursing or education and women in technology or leadership.
- Gender-neutral facilities: If guidance takes place in a physical location, make sure that facilities (including toilets and waiting areas) are inclusive and welcoming for all genders.
- Privacy and safety: Some individuals may require private conversations without fear of judgment or external influence.



Language and Communication

- Use gender-neutral terms: Avoid gendered job titles like "stewardess" or "policeman". Instead, use "flight attendant" or "police officer" to ensure inclusivity.
- Avoid assumptions about gender and career choices: Ask open-ended questions about interests rather than assuming a person's career choice is based on their gender. Example: Instead of saying, "Have you considered a career in nursing?" to a client based on their gender, ask "Which fields interest you the most?"
- Use inclusive forms of address: If relevant, ask individuals about their preferred address and pronouns.



Materials and Resources

- Review existing guidance materials: Are your brochures, presentations, and online resources free from gender stereotypes? If they contain examples, do they reflect diversity in careers and representation?
- Integrate case studies and success stories: Use examples of individuals who have chosen careers not traditionally associated with their gender to inspire and normalise broader career choices.
- Digital resources: Ensure that your digital career guidance materials reflect gender neutrality and diversity.



Behaviour and Guidance Practices

- Self-reflection and bias training: Consider taking a course on unconscious bias to become more aware of your assumptions.
- Be an active listener: Allow individuals to define their interests without steering them towards a particular choice based on gender stereotypes.
- Encourage open discussions on gender and career choices: Prompt individuals to reflect on how societal norms may have shaped their perception of career opportunities.
- Collaborate with businesses and educational institutions: Work with organisations that promote gender diversity in different sectors and provide information on mentoring opportunities or professional networks.



Tools and Resources

- Best Practice Database on Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance ([Best Practices - Guide your future](#))
- Euroguidance: European network that supports career guidance professionals [Lifelong Guidance | Euroguidance Network](#)
- UNESCO Gender Equality Toolkit for Career Guidance Practitioners ([Gender Equality Tools | UNESCO](#))
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Resources on Gender and Education ([Toolkits and guides | European Institute for Gender Equality](#))
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Gender Equality and Decent Work ([In focus: Women and the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\): SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth | UN Women - Headquarters](#))



GOOD PRACTICE

Institute of Physics (United Kingdom):

The Institute has developed guidelines for gender-inclusive career guidance, including the use of accurate information on educational pathways and required skills for various professions. They also recommend collecting and analysing student feedback to identify and address gender bias following guidance sessions [[Gender Inclusive Careers Guidance](#)]

Klischeefrei Initiative (Germany):

This initiative has developed method sets for different educational levels to encourage reflection on gender stereotypes in career choices. For example, the primary school method set includes tools for educational work with children, instructions for sensitisation and self-reflection among teaching staff, and parental involvement strategies. [[Gender-sensitive career guidance method sets | Euroguidance Network](#)]

Breaking Barriers in Education (The U.S.):

This project focuses on integrating gender-sensitive teaching practices into teacher education. Its goal is to equip future educators with the tools to support stereotype-free career guidance and inclusive teaching methods. Workshops, materials for gender-neutral pedagogy, and reflective excises help create environments that promote equality. [[Breaking down the barriers: Integrating the school and beyond in education](#)]

Role Model Campaigns (The Netherlands):

These campaigns highlight individuals from underrepresented genders in various professions to inspire youth to explore diverse career paths. For example, "Equals' 2025 Role Model Campaign" showcases successful women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and men in care professions. Through videos, articles, and social media, these role models help break stereotypes and broaden career perspectives. [[Role Model Campaign 2025 - Equals](#)] and [[Amsterdam's Equals launches 2025 'Role Model' campaign](#)]



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Section 7

Recommendations for Gender-Aware Career Guidance

Gender-sensitive career guidance ensures that individuals can explore and pursue careers free from biases and societal constraints. Integrating gender awareness into career counselling helps individuals recognise and challenge internalised stereotypes, access equal opportunities, and make career decisions based on their actual skills and interests.

Research indicates that gender biases in career development often begin at an early age due to cultural norms, societal expectations, and structural inequalities. These biases shape self-perceptions, confidence levels, and career aspirations, leading to a persistent underrepresentation of certain genders in specific fields, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) for individuals underrepresented in the field, and caregiving professions for others also underrepresented in these fields.

Career guidance professionals play a crucial role in mitigating these biases by providing equitable access to opportunities and fostering an environment where individuals can make career choices free from social conditioning. Gender-sensitive career counselling requires an awareness of the hidden barriers that may unconsciously steer individuals toward gender-stereotypical roles and a commitment to challenging these limitations.

This section provides actionable recommendations for organisations to enhance gender-sensitive career guidance practices.

Key Concepts in Gender-Aware Career Guidance:

Gender Bias in Career Development: How unconscious biases affect career choices and professional growth.

Institutional Barriers: Challenges in implementing gender-sensitive policies in career counselling, including discriminatory workplace structures and limited mentorship opportunities.

Best Practices in Gender Equity: Effective strategies for fostering inclusive career counselling that encourages career exploration beyond gender norms.

Self-Perception and Career Confidence: The role of self-efficacy in career decision-making and the need to empower individuals to pursue their aspirations regardless of gender expectations.

By addressing these factors, career guidance professionals can contribute to a more inclusive workforce where individuals can fully develop their potential without being limited by gender stereotypes.





Practical Application

To integrate gender sensitivity into career counselling, institutions should implement the following strategies:



1. Conduct Gender Equity Audits

- Assess career guidance resources for gender bias, ensuring that examples, case studies, and career pathways reflect a balanced gender representation.
- Collect and analyse gender representation data in different industries, highlighting disparities and opportunities for improvement.
- Identify unconscious biases in counselling approaches and adjust methodologies to ensure an inclusive advisory process.



2. Implement Training Programs for Career Counsellors

- Organise workshops on gender bias awareness, inclusive communication, and strategies for equitable career guidance.
- Use self-assessment tools to help counsellors reflect on and address their unconscious biases, fostering an environment of self-improvement. (<https://guideproject.eu/>)
- Develop competency frameworks emphasising gender-sensitive practices, ensuring that career professionals are equipped to support individuals effectively.



3. Develop Inclusive Career Exploration Tools

- Introduce self-reflection exercises that encourage individuals to identify and challenge internalised gender stereotypes affecting their career decisions. (<https://guideproject.eu/courses/gender-sensitive-career-guidance/>)
- Create interactive tools, such as quizzes and career matching activities, that broaden career aspirations beyond traditional gendered pathways.
- Incorporate multimedia resources, including videos and testimonials, that showcase diverse role models in various professional fields.



4. Foster Gender-Inclusive Career Counselling Environments

- Ensure counselling materials and job descriptions use gender-neutral and inclusive language.
- Promote mentorship programs that connect individuals with professionals from diverse backgrounds, particularly in non-traditional fields.
- Facilitate discussions on workplace diversity and inclusion, helping individuals navigate gender-related challenges in their career paths.



5. Engage Employers and Industry Leaders in Gender Awareness Initiatives

- Collaborate with businesses to promote inclusive hiring practices and career progression strategies that support gender diversity.
- Develop partnerships with organisations advocating for gender equity in the workforce, creating networks of support for career aspirants.
- Encourage industry leaders to serve as role models and mentors, demonstrating how diverse perspectives contribute to innovation and growth.



Tools and Resources

1. Gender-Sensitive Career Assessment Tools

- **O*NET Interest Profiler (USA):** A free tool designed to help individuals identify their work-related interests and match them to potential careers, minimizing gender bias. informationanthology.net+2services.onetcenter.org+2mynextmove.org+2
- **MyFuture (Australia):** Australia's National Career Information Service offering a career exploration tool that provides gender-neutral recommendations. <https://myfuture.edu.au/>

2. Gender Bias Detection & Training Tools

- **Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT):** An assessment that measures unconscious biases, including those related to gender, which can influence career perceptions. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- **UNESCO Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media:** Guidelines to help identify and reduce gender bias in media, applicable to career-related materials. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217831>

3. Digital Platforms Supporting Gender-Inclusive Career Paths

- **Career Girls (Global):** A free online platform featuring videos of diverse women professionals, aimed at inspiring girls to explore various careers. [<https://www.careergirls.org/>]
- **WISE (UK – Women in Science and Engineering):** Provides resources and guidance to encourage women to pursue careers in STEM fields. (<https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/>)

4. Gender-Inclusive Career Counseling Training Resources

- **ILO Toolkit on Gender in Employment:** A comprehensive guide to integrating gender-sensitive practices into employment and career counseling. (<https://guideproject.eu/gender-sensitive-career-guidance-toolkit/>) [https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/WCMS_187411/lang--en/index.htm]
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Training for Counselors:** Programs designed to help professionals integrate gender-aware guidance into their counseling practices. [<https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/competencies/multicultural-competencies>] <https://guideproject.eu/lets-identify-stereotypes-in-career-decisions/>

5. Mentorship & Networking Tools for Gender Diversity

- **Million Women Mentors (Global):** A movement connecting professional women in STEM with girls interested in STEM careers, offering mentorship and support. [<https://www.millionwomenmentors.com/>]
- **Lean In Circles (Global):** Peer mentoring platforms that promote leadership skills and support networks for women. [<https://leanin.org/circles>]

6. Gender-Sensitive Job Search & Career Development Platforms

- **Fairygodboss (USA & Global):** A job search site offering company reviews based on workplace gender inclusivity, aiming to support women's career decisions. [<https://fairygodboss.com/>]
- **Equalture (Europe):** A recruitment platform using bias-free assessment tools to promote fair hiring practices. [<https://www.equalture.com/>]



GOOD PRACTICE

Case Study 1: CHOICES Project – Gender-Sensitive Career Counselling for Women Graduates (Pakistan)

The CHOICES Project was developed to establish gender-sensitive career counselling services for female graduates in Pakistan. This initiative aimed to address gender disparities by integrating tailored career advice and mentorship for women, helping them navigate barriers in male-dominated fields. The project developed gender-sensitive guidelines and trained career counsellors on inclusive practices. It also compared implementation success in urban and rural areas, demonstrating the need for customized approaches depending on local socio-economic conditions. The initiative significantly increased women's confidence in exploring non-traditional career paths and provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of gender-focused career counselling.

[https://www.academia.edu/28655932/A Case Study of Establishing Gender Sensitive Career Counselling for Women Graduates in Pakistan](https://www.academia.edu/28655932/A_Case_Study_of_Establishing_Gender_Sensitive_Career_Counselling_for_Women_Graduates_in_Pakistan)



Case Study 2: GENDER-ED Project – Combating Gender Stereotypes in Career Guidance (Europe)

The GENDER-ED project aimed to challenge gender stereotypes in education and career guidance across multiple European countries. The initiative explored how schools, teachers, and curricula contribute to reinforcing gendered expectations in career choices. By conducting surveys and interviews, the project identified biases influencing students' perceptions of their capabilities. As a result, new educational tools and materials were developed for teachers and career counsellors to promote gender-inclusive career exploration. The project also introduced interactive workshops for students, which led to a measurable shift in attitudes toward non-traditional career options.

<https://medinstgenderstudies.org/gender-ed-combatting-gender-stereotypes-in-education-and-career-guidance/>



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Case Studies and Good Practices

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Quiz

What is the main objective of gender-sensitive career guidance?

- A To encourage men and women to follow traditional career paths.
- B To promote awareness and remove biases in career counselling.
- C To prioritize male participation in STEM careers.
- D To discourage women from choosing caregiving professions.

Which of the following is an example of a gender-sensitive practice in career counselling?

- A Encouraging only women to pursue teaching and nursing careers.
- B Using gender-neutral language in career advice materials.
- C Advising male students to avoid caregiving professions.
- D Recommending career paths based on stereotypes.

How can career counsellors help reduce unconscious gender bias?

- A By ensuring career advice is based on personal interests and skills, not gender.
- B By promoting only female participation in leadership roles.
- C By advising all students to pursue careers in STEM.
- D By discouraging discussions about gender equality.

What role do mentorship programs play in gender-sensitive career guidance?

- A They help reinforce traditional career roles.
- B They provide role models and support for individuals pursuing non-traditional careers.
- C They encourage students to follow their parents' career paths.
- D They limit career opportunities for women.

What is an institutional barrier that can impact gender-sensitive career guidance?

- A Lack of gender diversity in career counselling materials.
- B Encouraging equal representation in all fields.
- C Career advisors providing unbiased recommendations.
- D Offering career exploration sessions for all genders.

Which method can help challenge gender stereotypes in career counselling?

- A Avoiding discussions about gender altogether.
- B Providing real-life examples of diverse role models in various careers.
- C Steering women into STEM fields regardless of interest.
- D Encouraging all students to follow their parents' careers.



**Why is gender-neutral language important in career counselling?**

- A It prevents reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- B It limits career options for individuals.
- C It ensures that men and women only follow traditional paths.
- D It encourages gender-based career decisions.

What is the impact of self-efficacy on career choices?

- A It has no effect on career decision-making.
- B It influences confidence in pursuing certain career paths.
- C It ensures individuals always choose high-paying careers.
- D It prevents people from making independent decisions.

How can career guidance centers promote gender-inclusive environments?

- A By featuring a diverse range of career options in their resources.
- B By limiting career choices to traditional gender roles.
- C By encouraging men to take leadership roles only.
- D By discouraging women from entering STEM fields.

What is a key strategy for making career counselling more inclusive?

- A Ensuring that career advice is personalized and free from gender bias.
- B Recommending different career paths for men and women.
- C Encouraging all students to choose the same career path.
- D Avoiding discussions about career preferences.



Section 8

The Future of Gender-sensitive Career Counselling

Theoretical Background: AI Integration in Gender-sensitive Career Guidance Practice

Career guidance is undergoing a profound transformation as artificial intelligence tools are increasingly integrated into guidance practice. This development requires a theoretical understanding of how AI augments rather than replaces human counsellors, creating new opportunities for theory application and client support.

Theoretical framework for AI-enhanced gender-sensitive career counselling

At its core, the integration of AI in career guidance is a socio-cognitive extension of traditional guidance frameworks. The theoretical underpinning draws on both established career development theories and emerging concepts of human-AI collaboration. Large Language Models (LLMs) and specialised career assessment algorithms offer counsellors unprecedented opportunities to apply multiple theoretical lenses simultaneously, enhancing the depth and breadth of guidance provided.

Research suggests that many career professionals tend to rely primarily on familiar theoretical frameworks when working with clients (Yates, 2017). AI tools can help counsellors break this pattern by quickly analysing client information and biases through different theoretical orientations, from Holland's vocational personalities to social cognitive career theory, offering multi-dimensional insights that might otherwise remain unexplored.

The agency continuum in AI-assisted guidance

A critical theoretical consideration is what researchers call the "agency continuum" in AI-assisted guidance. This spectrum ranges from AI as a passive provider of information to an active participant in the guidance process. Career counsellors need to navigate this continuum thoughtfully, determining appropriate levels of AI agency for different aspects of the guidance process.

AI can function at different levels of maturity within the guidance ecosystem, from basic information provision to advanced pattern recognition and personalised intervention recommendations. This framework helps guidance practitioners theoretically position AI tools within their practice and understand when to use computational capabilities versus human empathy and judgement.

Pattern recognition and intervention timing

The theoretical contribution of AI to career guidance extends to what might be called 'intervention optimisation theory' - the ability to identify critical moments for career guidance based on pattern recognition in client data. Traditional guidance has been limited by the human ability to process complex patterns across multiple domains simultaneously.

AI systems can simultaneously analyse academic performance, psychometric scores, labour market trends and personal preferences to identify optimal moments for specific interventions. This represents a theoretical shift from periodic to continuous guidance models, where interventions are aligned with recognised patterns rather than predetermined schedules.

Integration challenges and theoretical tensions

The integration of AI tools introduces theoretical tensions between technological determinism and humanistic approaches to counselling. A balanced theoretical perspective recognises that AI complements rather than replaces the uniquely human elements of counselling - empathy, ethical reasoning and contextual understanding.

Effective AI integration requires counsellors to develop a theoretical foundation for practice that embraces technological enhancement while maintaining the core humanistic values of the profession. This balanced approach positions AI as a powerful tool that enhances counsellors' skills while preserving the essential human connection at the heart of meaningful guidance.



Practical Application

How AI tools can be practically applied in Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Counselling

Artificial intelligence tools like **Perplexity** and **ChatGPT** provide valuable assistance to career guidance counsellors, especially in gender-sensitive contexts. These tools can help counsellors prepare for sessions, address biases, and empower counselees with data-driven insights. Below is a practical guide for using these tools effectively, with concrete examples and actionable steps.

Why Familiarity with Perplexity and ChatGPT is Crucial

To maximise the benefits of these tools:

- **Perplexity:** Offers real-time, cited information for evidence-based counselling. Ideal for research on labour market trends, gender studies, and skill demands.
- **ChatGPT:** Provides creative simulations, role-playing, and personalized advice. Perfect for mock interviews, career exploration, and skill assessments.
- Combining both tools ensures a balance of accurate data (Perplexity) and empathetic interaction (ChatGPT).



Use Cases and Applications

1. Preparing for a Session

Objective: Gather relevant, up-to-date information to tailor the session.

Perplexity:

- Search: *"Latest statistics on women in STEM careers in Europe[2025]."*
- Use: Share this data with clients to highlight opportunities in underrepresented fields.

ChatGPT:

- Prompt: *"Generate 5 discussion questions to explore non-traditional career paths for women."*
- Example Output: *"What skills do you think are transferable to traditionally male-dominated fields?"*

Checklist for Preparation:

- ✓ Research gender-neutral job trends using Perplexity.
- ✓ Draft open-ended questions with ChatGPT to challenge stereotypes.

2. During a Counselling Session

Objective: Facilitate real-time exploration of career options and address client concerns.

Perplexity:

Use the "deep search/pro search" feature to refine searches during the session (e.g., *"Top industries hiring women in Germany [2025]."*)

ChatGPT:

Role-play scenarios with clients.

- Prompt: *"Simulate a conversation where a client expresses doubts about pursuing engineering as a woman."*

Example Dialogue Output:

Client: *"I'm not sure if I'll fit in as an engineer."*

ChatGPT Response: *"Let's explore how your problem-solving skills can make you stand out in this field."*



3. Interest and Skill Assessment



Objective: Avoid gendered assumptions when evaluating skills and interests.

ChatGPT:

- Prompt: *"Create a skill assessment questionnaire that avoids gendered language."*
- Example Output: Questions like *"What tasks do you enjoy most when solving problems?"* or *"Describe a time you successfully led a team project."*

Perplexity:

Search for labor market trends to align skills with demand (e.g., *"Top skills needed for renewable energy jobs [2025]."*)

4. Career Exploration



Objective: Broaden clients' perspectives by highlighting diverse career options.

Perplexity:

Search for emerging roles that challenge stereotypes (e.g., *"Careers where men are underrepresented [2025]."*) Share findings during the session.

ChatGPT:

Generate tailored career options based on interests.

- Prompt: *"Suggest 10 career paths for someone interested in technology but hesitant about traditional tech roles."*

Example Output: UX Designer, Data Ethics Consultant, Digital Accessibility Specialist.

5. Resume and Interview Preparation



Objective: Help clients present themselves confidently while avoiding biased language.

Perplexity:

Search for gender-neutral resume tips (e.g., *"Action verbs for resumes without gender bias."*). Use findings to refine client resumes.

ChatGPT:

Role-play mock interviews or rewrite resume points.

- Prompt: *"Rewrite this resume bullet point to sound more assertive without being gendered: 'Helped organise team projects.'"*
- Example Output: *"Coordinated cross-functional team projects to achieve deadlines."*

6. Addressing Bias



Objective: Equip clients to recognise and counter workplace biases.

Perplexity:

Research recent studies on workplace discrimination (e.g., *"Gender pay gap statistics in tech startups[2025]."*) Use findings to inform discussions.

**ChatGPT:**

Generate strategies or scripts for addressing bias during interviews or negotiations.

- Prompt: *"Provide tips for negotiating salary as a woman in a male-dominated industry."*

Example Output:

- 1 Research industry benchmarks before negotiating.
- 2 Use neutral language like, "Based on market data..."

**7. Empowering Counselees to Use AI Tools Themselves**

Teach clients how to use these tools independently to continue their career exploration outside sessions.

Perplexity Instructions for Clients:

- Search labour market trends (e.g., *"High-demand jobs in sustainable energy."*).
- Verify sources using Perplexity's citation feature.

ChatGPT Instructions for Clients:

- Practice interview responses by prompting ChatGPT (e.g., *"Help me answer the question 'Why should we hire you?'"*).
- Explore career paths by asking ChatGPT (e.g., *"Suggest careers that combine creativity and technology."*).

8. Limitations and Ethical Use of LLM Tools

While AI tools are powerful, they have limitations that counsellors must navigate carefully.

Key Considerations:

- Always verify information from Perplexity's citations before sharing with clients
- Avoid inputting sensitive client data into either tool to protect privacy.
- Be aware of biases in AI-generated outputs test prompts like *"Are nurses usually women?"* to identify stereotypes.
- Emphasise AI as a supplement not a replacement for human judgment and empathy.

Ethical Checklist:

- Cross-check AI outputs with reliable sources.
- Inform clients about the limitations of AI tools.
- Use AI responsibly by prioritizing inclusivity and accuracy.

Conclusion

By integrating Perplexity and ChatGPT into gender-sensitive career guidance counselling, professionals can enhance their practice with real-time data, personalised advice, and creative simulations while maintaining ethical standards. Familiarity with these tools enables counsellors to prepare thoroughly, engage effectively during sessions, address biases proactively, and empower clients to explore their potential beyond traditional boundaries all while ensuring that human insight remains central to the process.



Tools and Resources

- <https://chatgpt.com/>
- <https://www.perplexity.ai/>
- <https://www.yeschat.ai/gpts-20ToXUkvnW-Gender-Study-Helper>
- <https://careerbot.eu/de/home-de/>



GOOD PRACTICE



Case Studies in Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance

Early Childhood and Primary Education Interventions

The Klischeefrei initiative in Germany exemplifies systemic efforts to address gender stereotypes at their formative stages. Its method sets for early childhood education include reflective activities for teachers, such as analyzing classroom materials for implicit biases and engaging parents in discussions about gender-neutral career role models. For primary students, interactive storybooks depict characters in non-traditional roles e.g., male nurses and female engineers to broaden children's perceptions of career possibilities. Evaluations of these interventions show a 22% increase in children's willingness to consider gender-atypical professions after participation. Challenges remain in scaling these methods, particularly in regions with rigid gender norms, but the integration of teacher training and parental involvement has proven effective in fostering incremental cultural shifts.

Secondary School Programs and University-Level Challenges

At the secondary level, Klischeefrei's curriculum includes role-playing exercises where students confront workplace scenarios involving gender bias, such as unequal pay or discriminatory hiring practices. These activities are complemented by career fairs showcasing diverse professionals, which have been shown to reduce gender-stereotypical aspirations by 18% among participants [1]. Conversely, a University of Chicago study revealed persistent biases in higher education career guidance, where female students received disproportionate emphasis on work-life balance over professional advancement. In one experiment, female students inquiring about tech careers were 2.3 times more likely to receive warnings about workplace culture than male peers, ultimately deterring 34% from pursuing their initial interests. This disparity underscores the need for mandatory bias training for career advisors and standardized protocols to ensure equitable guidance.



Case Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Development

Gender-Sensitive Simulations in Vocational Training

A pioneering study in Canada developed a web-based simulation to train vocational rehabilitation providers in gender-sensitive care for youth with disabilities. The tool, co-designed with clinicians, presents scenarios such as addressing workplace discrimination against transgender individuals or encouraging young women to pursue STEM apprenticeships. Participants reported a 40% improvement in confidence to navigate gender-related issues after completing the simulation. One clinician noted, "The simulation forced me to confront my own assumptions about clients' capabilities based on gender it was a wake-up call". However, the study also identified hesitancy among providers to discuss gender identity, highlighting the need for ongoing support beyond initial training.





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Quiz

What is one of the ethical considerations when using AI tools like Perplexity and ChatGPT in career guidance?

- A Always verify information from AI citations before sharing
- B Rely solely on AI outputs without additional research
- C Input sensitive client data to gather personalised insights
- D Focus only on the convenience of using technology

What is a key outcome from the Klischeefrei initiative in Germany for early childhood education?

- A It eliminates traditional career roles entirely
- B It increased children's willingness to consider gender-atypical professions by 22%
- C It focuses exclusively on male role models
- D It reduces classroom participation for girls



How can AI assist in addressing biases during career counselling sessions?

- A By disregarding client feedback
- B By generating strategies for clients to tackle bias in interviews
- C By promoting traditional gender roles
- D By limiting career options for specific genders

What does the “agency continuum” in AI-assisted guidance refer to?

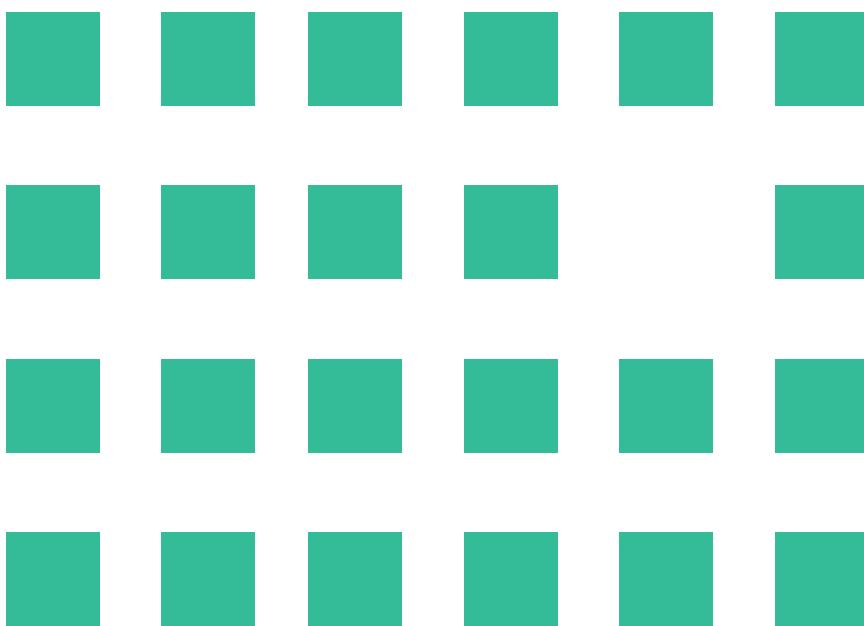
- A The varying levels of human participation in the guidance process
- B The range of AI's role from passive information provider to active participant
- C The complexity of AI algorithms
- D The technological capabilities of AI systems

Which AI tool can provide real-time, cited information for evidence-based career counselling?

- A ChatGPT
- B Perplexity
- C Google Docs
- D Zoom

Answers: A, B, B, B, B

Annexes





GSCG Toolkit Annex Denmark

Overview in Denmark

Gender equality in the Danish labour market is a key political and social focus area. Denmark is internationally recognized for its high employment rate among women and for having legislation that promotes gender equality. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of pay, management representation, and the division of labor in the home.

Legislation and political framework

Denmark has established a solid legislative framework for gender equality in the labour market:

- **The Equal Treatment Act:** Prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender in employment.
- **The Discrimination Act:** Deals with protection against discrimination in the labour market, including on the basis of gender.
- **The Equal Pay Act:** Ensures that men and women receive equal pay for equal work.

In addition, Denmark is bound by international conventions such as the **UN Convention on Women** and the **EU Gender Equality Directives**, which support national initiatives. The EU is also working on a forthcoming directive on wage transparency to promote equal pay [DM](#).

Unequal pay and gender segregation

Despite the legislation, there is still a significant pay gap between the sexes. According to Statistics Denmark, the pay gap in 2022 was 12.2%, which means that women earned on average 12.2% less than men [KVINFO](#). When adjusting for factors such as education, seniority, and job function, there is still an unexplained difference of around 7% [fju-ligestilling.dk](#).

The labor market is also characterized by gender segregation, with women often employed in low-paid public sector jobs, while men dominate high-paid private sector occupations [fju-ligestilling.dk](#).

Management and career opportunities

Women are underrepresented in top management and on boards of directors. According to the Diversity Barometer 2023, women continue to be overrepresented in lower management layers and underrepresented in top management and on boards of directors [Dansk Erhverv](#).

Statistics Denmark is actively working on policies and action plans for gender equality, including promoting a balanced gender distribution among employees and managers at all levels Statistics Denmark.

Division of labor and parental leave

A significant challenge to gender equality is the unequal division of labour in the home. On average, women spend 9 weeks more per year on domestic chores such as laundry, cooking, and cleaning. This unequal division of labour affects women's opportunities to participate fully in the labour market.

Overall assessment

Denmark has established a strong legislative framework for gender equality in the labour market. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of pay, management representation, and the division of labor in the home. Continued political initiatives and societal awareness are needed to achieve true gender equality.





Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Denmark

Current situation in Denmark

In Denmark, there is recognition of the need to break down gender segregation in the labour market. The partnership between the Danish Employers' Association, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, Local Government Denmark, Danish Regions and the Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment is actively working to find solutions that can promote gender equality in educational choices and in the labour market. This includes initiatives such as encouraging young people to choose education programmes and jobs that are traditionally gender-segregated. For example, less than one in ten applicants for electrician training are women, while only about one in ten nursing students are men [UddannelsesGuiden](#).

The Diversity Barometer 2024 shows that men continue to be strongly overrepresented in STEM+ subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, business economics, economics and law) and related industries, while women are overrepresented in health and social services [EQUALIS](#).

The government's initiatives focus on promoting less gender-segregated educational choices, as gender-segregated educational choices can limit young people's opportunities and create imbalances in the labour market [digmin.dk](#).

Gender-sensitive career guidance in the education sector

Educational institutions such as Copenhagen University College offer modules that focus on career guidance based on empirical studies of choice patterns and career paths [Copenhagen University College](#).

However, there is a need for more systematic integration of gender-sensitive guidance into teacher and counsellor training programmes to ensure that future counsellors are equipped to deal with gender-related challenges in career guidance.

Gender-sensitive career guidance in the labour market

In the labour market, the Diversity Barometer 2023 shows that women continue to be underrepresented in management and on boards, which is reflected in gender-segregated career paths Dansk Erhverv.

Initiatives such as KVINFO's mentor network support women with refugee and immigrant backgrounds in finding jobs or education, which can help break down barriers for women in the labour market [KVINFO](#).

Barriers to gender-sensitive career guidance

- Gender stereotypes and norms:** Existing gender stereotypes influence both guidance counsellors and young people, which can lead to guidance counsellors unconsciously recommending certain educational programmes or career paths based on gender [digmin.dk](#).
- Lack of gender-sensitive training:** There is a need for counsellors to receive training in gender-sensitive counselling to ensure that they can provide objective advice [Copenhagen University College](#).
- Structural barriers in the labour market:** Even if guidance is gender-sensitive, there are still structural barriers in the labour market that limit opportunities for women and men in certain sectors.
- Lack of role models:** The absence of visible role models in certain fields can make it more difficult for young people to imagine themselves in these roles. [arXiv](#).

Possible solutions and recommendations

- Education and training of guidance counsellors:** Implement regular training in gender-sensitive guidance to ensure that guidance counsellors are aware of their own preconceptions and can provide objective advice [Copenhagen University College](#).
- Promotion of role models:** Create platforms where young people can meet and interact with role models from different fields, especially those that are traditionally gender-segregated [arXiv](#).
- Updating guidance materials:** Ensure that guidance materials and resources are gender-sensitive and do not reinforce existing stereotypes [digmin.dk](#).
- Collaborating with the labour market:** Establish partnerships between educational institutions and businesses to create more opportunities for young people in underrepresented sectors [KVINFO](#).



There are currently several initiatives, policies and networks in Denmark that focus on promoting gender equality in education and career guidance. Some of the most notable are:

1. Perspective and Action Plan for Gender Equality (2025)

This plan contains several targeted measures to promote gender equality in education, work and family life. One of the specific focus areas is to promote gender equality in educational choices, including reducing gender segregation in the choice of education and occupation. The plan also supports the work of public authorities on gender equality, which may influence career guidance in both primary and secondary education. [Folketinget](#)

2. Action Plan for Gender Equality for Men and Boys

For the first time, Denmark has launched an action plan that specifically addresses gender equality for men and boys. In the areas of education and working life, the plan focuses on attracting more men to the care and health sectors, which are traditionally dominated by women. This includes initiatives such as 'Boys' Day in Care', which aims to change boys' perceptions of these professions and increase their participation. Funds have also been allocated to develop and test new recruitment methods to make these sectors more attractive to men. [Real equality](#)

3. Equal opportunities in education, work and family life

This initiative from the Ministry of Digitalisation focuses on ensuring equal opportunities for all people, regardless of gender, in relation to education, work and family life. This includes promoting less gender-segregated education programmes and working on how educational institutions can promote a more equal gender distribution. There is also a focus on strengthening knowledge about gender, sexuality and equality in the education system. [digmin.dk](#)

4. DM's work for equality in the labour market

The Danish Association of Masters and PhDs (DM) works actively for equality in the labour market. This includes ensuring equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender, including equal opportunities for education, employment, pay and career. DM also works for equal pay through collective agreements, member counselling and political influence. [DM](#)

5. UCL University College and University of Applied Sciences' research into inclusion and everyday life

UCL University College has a research programme called 'Inclusion and Everyday Life' that focuses on supporting children, young people and adults in vulnerable positions so that they can achieve equal opportunities in the institutions of the welfare society. Among other things, this programme examines how cooperation in schools is organised with other professionals around early interventions for children who are causing concern.

These initiatives and policies demonstrate a broad effort to promote gender equality in Denmark, both in terms of education and career guidance. They address both structural barriers and individual choices and aim to create a more equal and inclusive society.





Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

Here are two specific examples of initiatives in the Danish education sector that promote gender-sensitive career guidance:

1. Career learning in upper secondary school – EMU.dk

Career learning in lower secondary school is an approach that supports pupils in understanding themselves and their opportunities in relation to education and work. This approach promotes reflection on their own interests and abilities and helps pupils make informed choices. It is an important method for breaking gender stereotypes and ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to choose their future path. [Emu](#)

2. Recommendations from the expert group on gender

An expert group set up by the Ministry of Children and Education has drawn up recommendations that focus, among other things, on gender in educational guidance. The group points to the need to address gender-segregated search patterns and ensure that all children and young people have equal opportunities in their educational choices. [UVM](#)

These initiatives demonstrate an increased focus on gender-sensitive career guidance in Denmark and support efforts to create a more equal and inclusive education system.



Conclusions & Recommendations

In Denmark, gender equality in the labour market is a key political and social priority. Denmark has a strong legislative framework, including legislation on equal treatment, discrimination and equal pay, as well as obligations under international conventions and EU directives. Despite this, challenges remain, such as pay gaps (women earn on average 12.2% less than men), gender segregation in the labour market and under-representation of women in management. In addition, the unequal distribution of domestic work affects women's participation in working life.

In career guidance, the need to break down gender segregation, both in education and in the labour market, is recognised. Efforts are being made to promote gender-sensitive guidance methods, but barriers such as gender stereotypes, lack of gender-sensitive training for guidance counsellors, structural labour market barriers and lack of role models are hampering progress. Government initiatives and partnerships focus on supporting young people in choosing education and jobs across traditional gender boundaries.

Several national plans and projects, such as the Perspective and Action Plan for Gender Equality (2025) and the Action Plan for Men's and Boys' Equality, are working specifically to promote gender balance in education and the labour market. In the education sector, initiatives such as career learning in upper secondary school and recommendations from expert groups on gender are highlighted as concrete examples of good practice in gender-sensitive career guidance.

Overall, Denmark shows a strong commitment to promoting gender equality, but continued efforts are needed to overcome the persistent challenges.

The GUIDE project toolkit addresses several of the challenges within gender-sensitive career guidance outlined at national level, both within the education sector and in the labour market.

The toolkit can thus be used as one of several means of promoting gender-sensitive career guidance. It is particularly useful as a guide tool for career choices in the lower levels of the education sector, where young people are faced with choosing a professional career. Here, the Guide's focus on awareness and avoiding gender stereotypes can help career guidance practitioners provide more qualified gender-sensitive career guidance.



GSCG Toolkit Annex Greece

Overview in Greece

In Greece, efforts to advance **gender equality in education and career choices** date back to the 1950s and are aligned with EU frameworks. Despite policy support and awareness campaigns, gendered patterns persist in career pathways: women dominate sectors like education, healthcare, and social services, while men remain prevalent in STEM, technical, and construction fields. These patterns are rooted in deep-seated societal norms that influence both early guidance and adult decision-making.

Although career guidance is offered across schools, VET institutions, and universities via bodies like EOPPEP and university career offices, **systematic application of gender-sensitive approaches remains limited**. The GUIDE Toolkit is well positioned to bridge this gap by providing structured, practical resources tailored to the Greek context.

Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Greece

Practices in Place

- Career guidance is delivered through KESYP centres, university offices, and EOPPEP-coordinated networks. A national quality assurance model is in place, although challenges persist in infrastructure, training, and referral systems.
- NGOs and EU-funded projects, including GUIDE, support awareness-raising and mentoring in gender diversity.
- Campaigns by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality continually promote the importance of equal opportunity in career development.

Challenges Identified

- Persistent stereotypes: learners especially girls are channelled into traditional roles, while boys face pressure toward technical or leadership careers.
- Insufficient training for guidance professionals in gender-sensitive methodologies.
- Cultural norms and family expectations continue to shape career choices.
- Labour market inequalities: Women struggle to access STEM and managerial roles; men face stigma in care-related fields.

Recent Initiatives

- Pilot use of the Digital Stereotype-Identification Tool in select VET institutions.
- Short workshops and webinars promoting inclusive guidance are gaining traction among educators and career trainers.
- The GUIDE online course is piloting in Greek and other partner languages to support professionals in practical application.



Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

Feedback from Practitioners

Greek career guidance professionals interviewed for the Toolkit evaluation highlighted its clarity and practical relevance, praising the balance between theory and hands-on tools. They found that the content supports meaningful changes in daily guidance practice.

Good Practice Examples

In Greece, Greek Women in STEM (GWiS) runs a standout one-to-one mentoring programme that connects aspiring women scientists – often university or postgraduate students – with experienced female professionals across STEM fields. This free, online initiative fosters personalised guidance, motivation, and exposure to role models from technology, engineering, and research careers. Participants consistently report increased confidence and clarity in their career decisions – and many attribute this to the empathetic support of their mentor. The programme exemplifies how mentoring can challenge stereotypes and open doors for women in non-traditional fields such as data science, engineering, or tech management.

On the other side of the gender divide, professions like nursing and early childhood education remain heavily female in Greece. Although targeted mentoring programmes for male learners are not yet widespread, international evidence and early pilots underscore their potential value. For example, studies highlight that mentoring male students entering nursing can significantly reduce stigma and help them build essential professional identity and skills. While such formal initiatives are still emerging in Greece, the rising interest in inclusive education and guides such as the WHEN "School of No Bias" programme (which addresses STEM inclusivity at the classroom level) point toward expanding landscapes of gender-aware mentoring.

- **STEM Role Models for Girls:** NGO-led initiatives invite female STEM professionals into schools to mentor and inspire female students.
- **Mentoring for Male Students in Care Professions:** Programmes pairing male learners with mentors in nursing and early education help address stigmas and encourage diversity.



Conclusions & Recommendations

The external evaluators have affirmed that the Toolkit holds strong relevance for Greece, particularly valuing its practical tools, adaptability, and flexible structure that can support diverse settings. To ensure its effectiveness and uptake, the following strategic actions are recommended:

- **Broaden Dissemination:** Share the Toolkit widely across school counselling services, VET institutions, university career offices (e.g. KESY, EOPPEP, DASTA), and HR departments of public and private organisations. Embedding it within existing frameworks, such as the national quality assurance model for guidance services, will enhance its visibility and impact. Cedefop's guidance system insights highlight the potential of such institutional integrations.
- **Facilitate Implementation via Training:** Organise webinars, workshops, and CPD activities to accompany the Toolkit's rollout. These sessions should focus on using the Digital Stereotype Identification Tool, the Co-Creation Model, and the online course modules to promote uptake among guidance professionals, educators, and trainers.
- **Leverage National Case Studies and Practices:** Integrate Greek good practice examples such as mentoring programmes by Greek Women in STEM and pilot VET initiatives addressing male engagement in care professions as illustrative annexes and case studies. These contextualised insights will help practitioners apply the general guidance to real-life scenarios in Greece.
- **Encourage Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage professional bodies, NGOs like Women On Top, and networks such as WHEN to facilitate active dissemination and participatory use of the Toolkit. Their involvement will reinforce credibility and foster a broader community of practice.

As a harmonised component of the full Toolkit, this annex provides **Greek-specific insights**, combining grounded country-level context with the overarching European framework. Together with other national annexes it ensures that the Toolkit is both **inclusive and contextually resonant** and effectively supports gender-sensitive career guidance that reflects the lived experiences of counsellors and learners across Greece and Europe.



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GSCG Toolkit Annex Cyprus

Overview in Cyprus

Cyprus has made steady progress in mainstreaming gender equality across education, employment, and public policy, though gendered patterns in subject choice and occupational segregation persist particularly in STEM, care-related fields, and technical trades. The external evaluation of the Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance (GSCG) Toolkit in Cyprus confirmed its strong relevance to this context, with practitioners rating the overall structure and usability highly (average 4.17/5; design & structure 4.33/5). These findings reflect a system increasingly focused on equitable education and career progression, but still contending with entrenched stereotypes in both schooling and the labour market. The Toolkit's practical tools and real-life examples directly address this need by equipping practitioners with accessible resources to identify, discuss, and counteract bias in career decision-making. The external evaluation of WP5 in Cyprus shows that practitioners rated the Toolkit highly for structure and usability.

According to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), a decisive policy shift came with the 2024–2026 National Strategy for Gender Equality the first comprehensive strategy of its kind developed following extensive consultations.

Institutional mechanisms have also been upgraded. The National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR) ensures gender mainstreaming in the use of EU Cohesion Policy Funds, while a 2023 Council of Ministers decision mandated that every ministry and deputy ministry appoint a gender focal point. The July 2024 Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law further institutionalised this framework, upgrading the Commissioner's role and embedding gender focal points across the public administration. Notably, Cyprus also adopted a National Action Plan (2021–2025) to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, underscoring recognition of the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and their vital role in peacebuilding.

Taken together, these developments indicate a strong institutional commitment to gender mainstreaming, but also highlight the importance of concrete, easy-to-use instruments like the GSCG Toolkit. The Toolkit complements Cyprus's strategic priorities by translating high-level commitments into practical steps that counsellors can implement in schools, VET centres, and private guidance services, directly supporting the objectives of the 2024–2026 national strategy and contributing to the broader European and international agenda on gender equality.

Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Cyprus

Insights from the counsellors consulted during the GUIDE interviews reveal that many adolescents approach guidance with broad sector interests (e.g., business, law, IT, engineering, health), often prioritising perceived earnings and prestige over fit, values, or working realities.

Practices in place

Career guidance in Cyprus is delivered primarily through the secondary education system, vocational institutions, and private counselling services. Over the past decade, there has been a gradual shift toward more personalised and inclusive approaches. School counsellors and private advisors emphasise that their role is to support students in identifying individual interests and strengths, rather than prescribing pathways that reflect traditional gender roles. For example, some counsellors describe introducing diagnostic tools, aptitude tests, and reflective exercises that help students explore a broad spectrum of careers without reference to gender. The GSCG Toolkit reinforces these practices: Cypriot practitioners praised its structured tools and real-life examples as "ready to use" in sessions, making it easier to incorporate gender-sensitive reflection without needing to design bespoke materials.

Another positive development is the timing of interventions. Guidance is no longer confined to the final years of upper secondary school. Instead, counsellors now begin earlier, in lower secondary, so that students can make informed subject choices that will later shape their higher education and vocational opportunities. This earlier involvement reflects recognition that stereotypes often crystallise well before adolescence. In addition, in private practice, counsellors described deliberately using "myth-busting" methods such as contrasting the romanticised image of medicine or law with the demanding reality of those professions to push students to think critically about their motivations. Such approaches are seen as essential for counteracting prestige-driven choices.



Challenges identified

Despite these advances, the persistence of gendered assumptions in education and employment remains a significant barrier. The MIGS (2020) study documents study, teachers and counsellors themselves can reproduce stereotypes, sometimes unconsciously.

The labour market context reinforces these patterns. Employers often signal preferences for male or female applicants, shaping the advice counsellors give to students. Women are still more frequently channelled into lower-level or support positions, while men are perceived as more suitable for leadership and technical roles. Pay gaps and the enduring male breadwinner model exacerbate these dynamics. Work-life balance considerations are an especially strong factor for young women, who often make choices based on anticipated family responsibilities. These realities sustain vertical and horizontal segregation, despite a policy framework that enshrines equality.

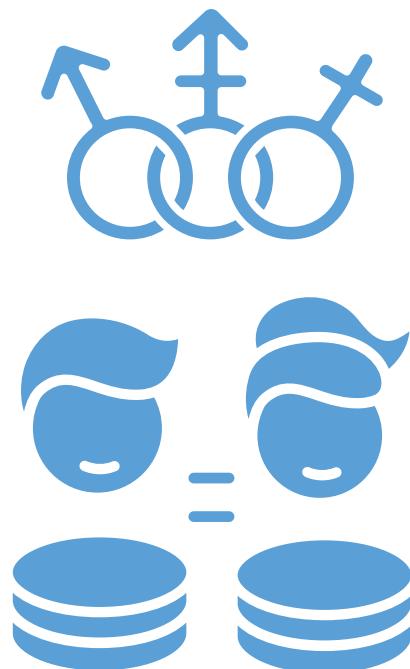
Another challenge is the lack of comprehensive and accessible information about career options, particularly technical and vocational pathways (MIGS, 2020). Students and parents are often unaware of the range of opportunities in VET and STEM, while university education continues to be valorised as the "superior" route. As a result, technical schools remain underpopulated by girls, and many young people make choices based more on social perceptions than on labour market realities or personal fit.

Recent initiatives and momentum

The piloting of the GSCG Toolkit itself marks an important step forward. Practitioners in Cyprus rated it highly for clarity, practicality, and ease of use (4.17/5), with only minor requests for additional interactive content. This shows both readiness to engage with gender-sensitive guidance and appetite for concrete tools that can be applied immediately in practice.

According to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (2025), a decisive policy shift came with the 2024–2026 National Strategy for Gender Equality – the first comprehensive strategy of its kind – developed following extensive consultations.

The MIGS study adds a critical perspective: while policy commitments are strong, change requires long-term investment, systematic teacher training, and dedicated budget lines. Without these, efforts risk remaining symbolic rather than transformative. The GSCG Toolkit aligns well with these recommendations, offering a practical means of bridging policy ambition with day-to-day counselling practice.





Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

What practitioners are saying

As highlighted by the counsellors involved in the interviews done in the context of the project, students approach career guidance with broad but often prestige-driven aspirations. Law, medicine, business, and engineering are frequently cited as desirable fields, largely due to perceptions of high salaries, stability, and social prestige.

Parents remain highly influential in shaping decisions, but their role is evolving. Rather than imposing choices, parents increasingly act as co-decision-makers, helping their children weigh options and providing the financial support needed for studies. Grandparents also play a role, often transmitting traditional views about "appropriate" careers for boys and girls. At the same time, social media has emerged as a powerful force, shaping aspirations through influencers, online narratives, and lifestyle imagery. Practitioners noted that this influence can reinforce stereotypes such as associating masculinity with engineering and femininity with aesthetics but also occasionally broaden horizons by exposing youth to non-traditional role models.

From the labour market side, counsellors pointed to employers as another source of gendered influence. Some openly express preferences for male or female employees, while others subtly reinforce stereotypes through recruitment and promotion practices. As one focus group participant noted, women are often placed in support roles, while men are seen as natural leaders or technical specialists. Such dynamics complicate the work of counsellors, who must balance realistic advice with efforts to challenge inequality.

Illustrative good practices from Cyprus career counselling

MIGS (2020) also points to several innovative practices that are emerging in Cyprus to counter these challenges.

- *Myth-busting prestige professions:* Counsellors deliberately challenge students' idealised views of medicine, law, or engineering by presenting the demands, risks, and long training periods required. This technique helps students think critically about whether these careers align with their values and lifestyle expectations.
- *Reframing non-traditional choices:* A powerful local example is that of a young man who combined business management with the beauty industry, successfully running a spa. Counsellors use this case to dismantle the assumption that beauty is a "female" field, instead presenting it as a viable entrepreneurial opportunity.
- *Role-model storytelling:* MIGS stresses the value of role models who defy stereotypes, such as women in technical professions and men in care sectors. Incorporating these examples into classroom discussions or guidance materials helps normalise counter-stereotypical paths.
- *Exposure visits:* Teachers interviewed in the MIGS study recommended organising visits to technical schools and STEM workplaces to give students firsthand experience and combat preconceptions. This exposure is especially important for girls, who remain underrepresented in these fields.

User experiences of the Toolkit

Feedback from Cypriot practitioners who piloted the GSCG Toolkit was overwhelmingly positive. They appreciated the practicality of the tools and templates, noting that they could be used directly in sessions without additional adaptation. The clarity of the structure and examples was also praised, with most users finding the Toolkit intuitive and accessible. Suggestions for improvement centred on adding more interactive and experiential elements, such as role-playing exercises, scenarios, and gamified activities, to better engage students and bring concepts to life. This feedback aligns with broader recommendations from the MIGS study, which called for early, hands-on interventions that go beyond information provision to actively challenge stereotypes.

Overall, stakeholder perspectives highlight both the persistence of gendered norms and the promising practices emerging to counter them. Practitioners are not only aware of the challenges but also experimenting with creative approaches many of which can be strengthened and scaled through the structured support of the GSCG Toolkit.



Conclusions & Recommendations

Cyprus shows both readiness and need for gender-sensitive career guidance. The Toolkit has been positively received, aligning well with the new National Strategy for Gender Equality and filling gaps in counsellors' resources. However, stereotypes persist across education, labour market practices, and even within professional guidance itself. MIGS highlights that without long-term, funded commitments particularly teacher training and systematic information campaigns progress risks plateauing.

Recommendations for integration/adaptation

- 1. Localise with Cyprus-specific cases:** embed examples from technical schools, local employers, and national equality strategies to make the Toolkit contextually relevant.
- 2. Enhance experiential learning:** integrate short challenges, gamified quizzes, and role-play scenarios that expose unconscious gender steering and prestige myths.
- 3. Strengthen exposure to non-traditional paths:** link guidance activities to visits, demonstrations, and success stories in underrepresented fields (as urged by MIGS and teachers).
- 4. Engage parents and employers:** develop short awareness sessions and employer briefings to counteract family and workplace stereotyping that influences career decisions.

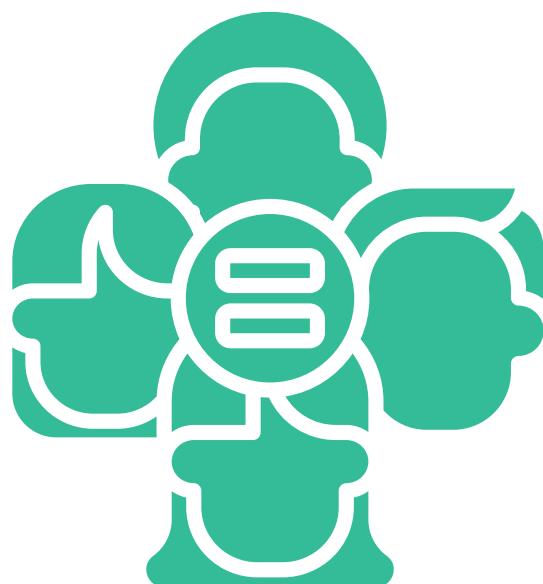
How this annex complements the GUIDE Toolkit

This annex bridges high-level policy with practice: it situates the Toolkit within Cyprus's legislative and strategic framework, incorporates practitioner voices and employer realities, and provides locally grounded recommendations for adaptation. By doing so, it ensures the Toolkit does not remain an abstract resource but becomes an actionable instrument for tackling gender segregation in Cypriot education and employment.



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GSCG Toolkit Annex Portugal

Overview in Portugal

Portugal has a consolidated legal and institutional framework for gender equality. The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic enshrines gender equality as a fundamental right, and the Law no. 62/2017 establishes balanced representation between women and men in decision-making bodies.

The key national entities with missions specifically devoted to address gender equality include the CIG – Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality and CITE – Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment.

CIG (<https://www.cig.gov.pt/>) is a national public policy body for gender equality in Portugal. It operates under the Government (currently within the Ministry of the Presidency). The scope of action of CIG is broad, involving a cross-sectoral action in areas such as education, health, justice, employment, gender-based violence, civic and political participation. This is the entity that is responsible for implementing the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (ENIND 2018–2030). It has a core role in developing awareness campaigns, domestic violence prevention programs, and educational projects on equality.

CITE (<https://cite.gov.pt/>) plays a central role in implementing equality policies across education, employment, and public life. It has a tripartite structure involving representatives of Government, trade unions, and employers' associations. It acts, and preventing and addressing a specialized and technical body focusing specifically on the world of work and employment. It aims at ensuring equal treatment and opportunities between women and men in the workplace, discrimination at work (e.g., pay gaps, access to positions, dismissals). Among its actions we highlight the provision of recommendations and technical opinions on labor equality and work-life balance.

Overall CITE has a technical and legal role linked to employment and labor law, while the CIG has a strategic and societal role across multiple policy areas.

Other active entities include the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (PpDM) - <https://plataformamulheres.org.pt/international/english/> - a social, cultural and humanist non-governmental organisation, independent from political parties, religious institutions or governmental structures, whose members are women's rights NGOs.

The Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights represents Portugal in the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and in the Association of Women from Meridional Europe (AFEM), and it is a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (FFEM). The Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights is a member of the EU Civil Society Platform against trafficking and has Special Consultative Status by the UN ECOSOC.

Key policies include the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018–2030 (ENIND) and the National Plan for Equality between Women and Men 2022–2026, which provide guidelines for mainstreaming gender

perspectives in education, vocational training, and labor market integration.

Key labor market facts:

- Employment rate (15–74 years) (2025): women 62.4%, men 68.7%.
- Unadjusted gender pay gap: ≈8.6% (Eurostat, 2023).
- Higher concentration of women in education, health, and care sectors; men predominate in STEM, construction, and engineering.
- Female graduates in STEM between 20 and 29 years old were at 15,7/1000 inhabitants, while for male the rate is 27,6/1000 inhabitants (Ministry of Education, 2020).
- Youth unemployment rate for the group of 16-14 years old was at 20.9% (female 22.4% and male 20.9%) (INE 2024).

Relevant policies and strategies – Portugal

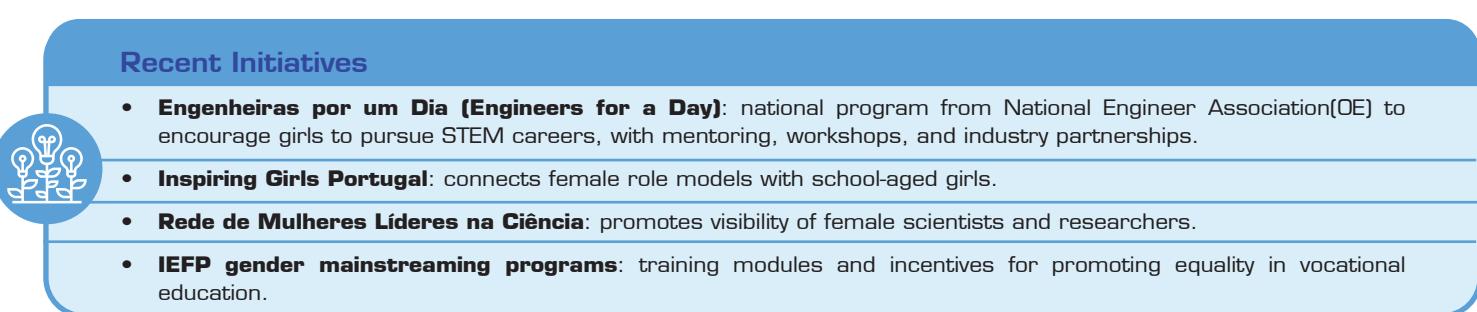
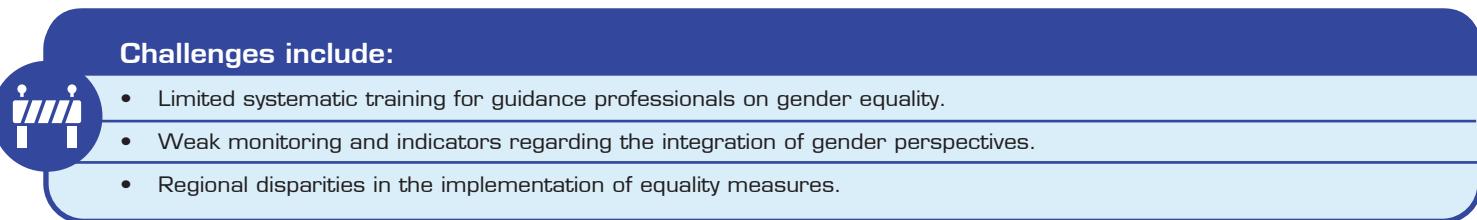
- The **National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018–2030 (ENIND)** (<https://www.incode2030.gov.pt/>) establishes a long-term framework for promoting gender equality, combating discrimination, and preventing gender-based violence. It is implemented through multi-annual action plans.
- **Municipal Equality Plans** are local-level planning instruments for public policies on equality. They define strategies to address and transform gender asymmetries identified through a local gender diagnosis, integrating gender mainstreaming measures and specific actions, and establishing objectives, indicators, measurable targets, and mechanisms for evaluation.
- **Municipal Equality Plans (PMIs)** are local-level planning instruments for public policies on equality. They are developed and implemented by municipal governments often in collaboration with local equality officers, community organizations, and the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG). These plans outline strategies to address and transform gender asymmetries identified through a local gender diagnosis, integrating gender mainstreaming measures and specific actions, and establishing objectives, indicators, measurable targets, and mechanisms for evaluation.
- In the **education system**, policies encourage gender mainstreaming through coeducation principles in schools and the integration of equality objectives in vocational and higher education. In the **university and research sphere**, there are equality units in most universities, as well as initiatives led by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT), which require gender equality plans and promote balanced participation in research projects.



Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Portugal

Career guidance in Portugal is offered in schools (via Psychology and Guidance Services – SPO), universities, and through the public employment service (IEFP – Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional).

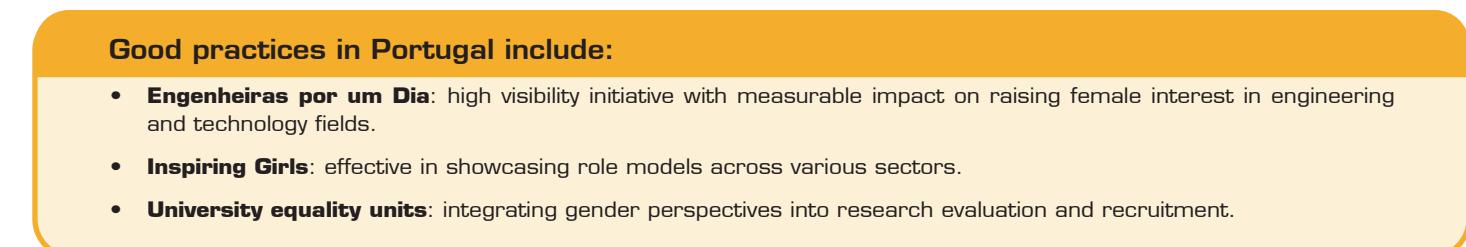
Although the education system integrates principles of equity and inclusion, gender mainstreaming in career guidance remains uneven. There is no mandatory gender-sensitivity training for counselors, and practices vary between institutions. Persistent occupational segregation continues to influence choices: girls are underrepresented in vocational and higher education programs in STEM, while boys are underrepresented in health and care.



Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

Interviews with education professionals, HR specialists, and policymakers highlight that although gender equality is part of the policy framework, its **translation into daily career guidance practice is inconsistent**.

- **School counselors** often lack practical resources tailored to dismantle stereotypes in career choices.
- **Vocational training providers** confirm persistent gender segregation in enrollments (e.g., ICT courses dominated by boys, care and education dominated by girls).
- **Employers and HR experts** recognize that stereotypes still shape recruitment and self-perception: young women may undervalue their skills for technical positions.





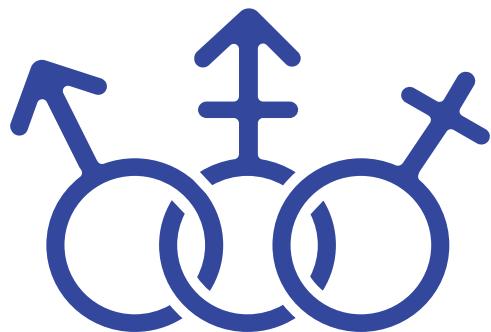
Conclusions & Recommendations

Summary of key findings:

- Portugal has a strong legal and policy framework for gender equality.
- Persistent occupational segregation and lack of systematic training for guidance counselors remain key barriers.
- Good practices exist but are fragmented and not yet mainstreamed across the education and employment systems.

Recommendations:

- Make **gender-sensitivity training mandatory** for all career guidance professionals.
- Strengthen **monitoring indicators** to measure integration of gender perspectives in career pathways.
- Expand and systematize initiatives such as *Engenheiras por um Dia* and *Inspiring Girls* nationwide.
- Foster stronger **school-industry partnerships** to promote diverse career pathways for both girls and boys.





GSCG Toolkit Annex Slovenia

Overview in Slovenia

Slovenia has a long-standing commitment to gender equality, embedded in its constitutional and legislative framework. Article 14 of the Slovenian Constitution guarantees equal human rights and prohibits discrimination based on sex, while Article 49 ensures equal employment opportunities (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025). Gender mainstreaming was formally introduced through the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (2002) and further reinforced by the Protection against Discrimination Act (2016) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025).

In the labour market, Slovenia shows relatively high female participation compared to the EU average. In

2023, the employment rate was 69.4% for women and 75.4% for men, both above the EU27 average (European Commission, 2025). However, persistent gender gaps remain, particularly in pay, pension, and occupational segregation (UN Women, 2024).

The Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023–2030 outlines strategic goals such as reducing gender gaps in employment and education, promoting equal care responsibilities, and combating stereotypes (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025).



Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Slovenia

Career guidance in Slovenia is provided through a network of institutions including schools, universities, career centres, and the Employment Service of Slovenia. The concept of lifelong guidance is well established and includes vocational, educational, and personal guidance across all life stages. (Employment Service of Slovenia, 2023)

Gender sensitivity in career guidance is not yet systematically embedded. While some institutions and professionals are aware of the importance of avoiding gender bias, there is no national framework or mandatory training that ensures consistent implementation. Existing practices vary significantly across regions and institutions.

However, efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes in career choices are reflected in broader national activities aimed at reducing gender gaps in education and promoting women in science and research. The government has launched initiatives to empower women and girls in STEM fields and to address the digital gender gap. A nationally recognised project with these objectives is Female Engineer of the Year (UN Women, 2024).

Challenges of gender sensitive career guidance reflect broader societal shortcomings in addressing gender equality. The lack of coordinated efforts to dismantle gender norms and redistribute care responsibilities across society is mirrored in career guidance systems, where gender bias remains insufficiently monitored and addressed (UN Women, 2024):

- Persistent gender stereotypes influence career choices, particularly in technical and STEM fields, where women remain underrepresented.
- Despite Slovenia's well-organised and affordable childcare system, particularly its extensive public preschool network, the unequal distribution of care responsibilities persists. Traditional gender roles continue to place a disproportionate burden of care on women, which affects their career progression and availability for full-time employment.
- Limited institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming in some ministries and sectors, despite legal obligations. (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025)
- Occupational segregation, with men dominating higher-paid sectors and women concentrated in education, healthcare, and social services. [30% of employed women compared to only 7% of employed men work in education, human health, and social work activities (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024)].



Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

At the start of the GUIDE project, we interviewed six professionals working with young people on career decision-making. Their insights offer a snapshot of current practices in Slovenia.

Gender-sensitive career guidance is mostly approached informally and individually. Counsellors report that they focus on personal interests rather than gender, yet gendered patterns persist - girls tend to choose pedagogical, healthcare and beauty-related professions, while boys gravitate toward technical fields such as engineering and IT.

Stereotypes such as the idea that certain professions are more prestigious or appropriate based on academic performance still influence choices and can lead to dissatisfaction. Parents remain a strong influence, either guiding or supporting decisions, and are often key sources of information.

Although some good practices exist, such as early exposure to diverse professions and encouraging self-confidence, most interviewees had little to say about gender specifically. This suggests that gender sensitivity is not yet a structured or prioritized element in career guidance practice.

Interview summaries are available at <https://guideproject.eu/interviews/>.

Several initiatives in Slovenia showcase effective approaches to promoting gender equality in career guidance and reducing gender-based segregation in education and the labour market.

Boys in Care is an international project (in Slovenia coordinated by the Peace Institute) that addresses the underrepresentation of men in care-related professions such as education, health, and social work. It provides practical tools for career counsellors, including a [handbook](#) with gender-sensitive methodologies and school workshops. Activities like "Boys' Day" encourage young men to explore non-traditional career paths, challenging stereotypes and fostering diversity in vocational choices.

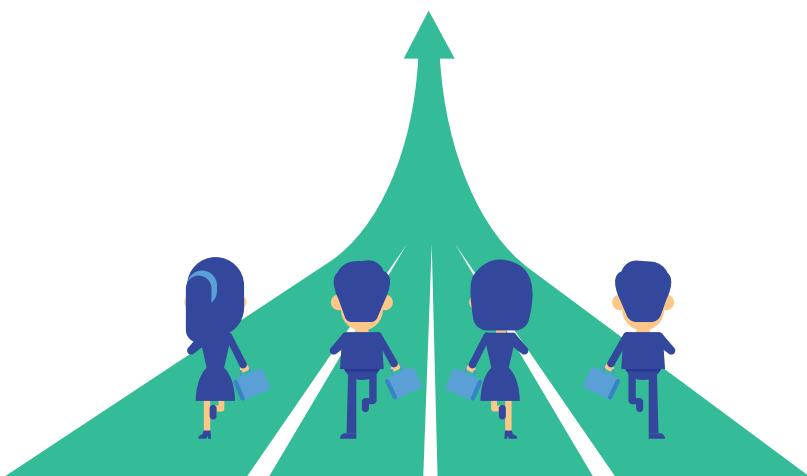
Another initiative, **WomenUp**, focuses on empowering vulnerable women such as those with low qualifications, long-term unemployment, or migrant backgrounds by supporting their career development and labour market integration. The project develops gender-sensitive guidance tools, offers training for counsellors, and provides a digital platform with resources for organizations working with disadvantaged groups.

A national mentoring program **Kolegice** designed for young women entering the labour market, connects participants with experienced female mentors from various sectors, offering guidance, networking opportunities, and workshops on soft skills and career planning. By fostering confidence and professional growth, the program helps reduce gender inequalities and supports women in achieving their career aspirations.

The **Online Mentor** project developed innovative e-mentoring approaches to support women in their professional development. It created a [collection of best practices](#) and digital tools for mentors and mentees, enabling flexible, inclusive, and gender-sensitive career guidance. The project emphasized digital mentoring as a way to overcome geographical and social barriers.

STELLA focuses on equipping teachers and career counsellors with tools and training to promote gender equality in education and guidance. It provides practical guidelines, learning modules, and digital resources to help educators challenge stereotypes and implement inclusive practices in classrooms and counselling sessions.

These initiatives demonstrate how targeted programs can address gender stereotypes, promote equal opportunities, and strengthen inclusive career guidance practices in Slovenia.





Conclusions & Recommendations

Slovenia has a strong legislative foundation for gender equality, yet gender-sensitive career guidance is not systematically implemented. Despite promising initiatives such as Boys in Care, WomenUp, Kolegice, and STELLA, challenges persist including stereotypical career choices, unequal distribution of care responsibilities, and limited institutional capacity for mainstreaming gender equality in guidance practices.

This annex provides a localized insight into the current state of gender-sensitive career guidance in Slovenia. It complements the GUIDE Toolkit by offering empirical data, outlining key challenges, and showcasing good practices. In doing so, it contributes to a broader understanding of how the Toolkit can be adapted to national contexts and supports the development of more inclusive and equitable guidance systems.

The Toolkit is a practical and accessible resource that can be used by both individual practitioners and institutions. It offers a clear overview of why gender-sensitive career guidance matters and how to approach it effectively. While certain aspects such as linguistic challenges in highly gendered languages like Slovenian may complicate implementation, many of the proposed strategies are easily applicable.



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GSCG Toolkit Annex Germany

Overview in Germany

Germany has a well-established system of vocational and educational guidance, supported by several key stakeholders including the Federal Employment Agency, schools, universities, and numerous regional and local counselling services. Gender equality has long been an integral part of education and labor market policy programs. Although female labor force participation continues to rise (2023: 77.2% for women vs. 85% for men), significant differences remain in career choices (e.g., gendered clustering in STEM vs. social professions), access to leadership roles, and earnings (Gender Pay Gap 2024: 16%). Germany addresses these challenges through a range of measures, such as legal requirements for gender-balanced appointments to supervisory boards of major companies, and the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), which prohibits discrimination based on gender. [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#)

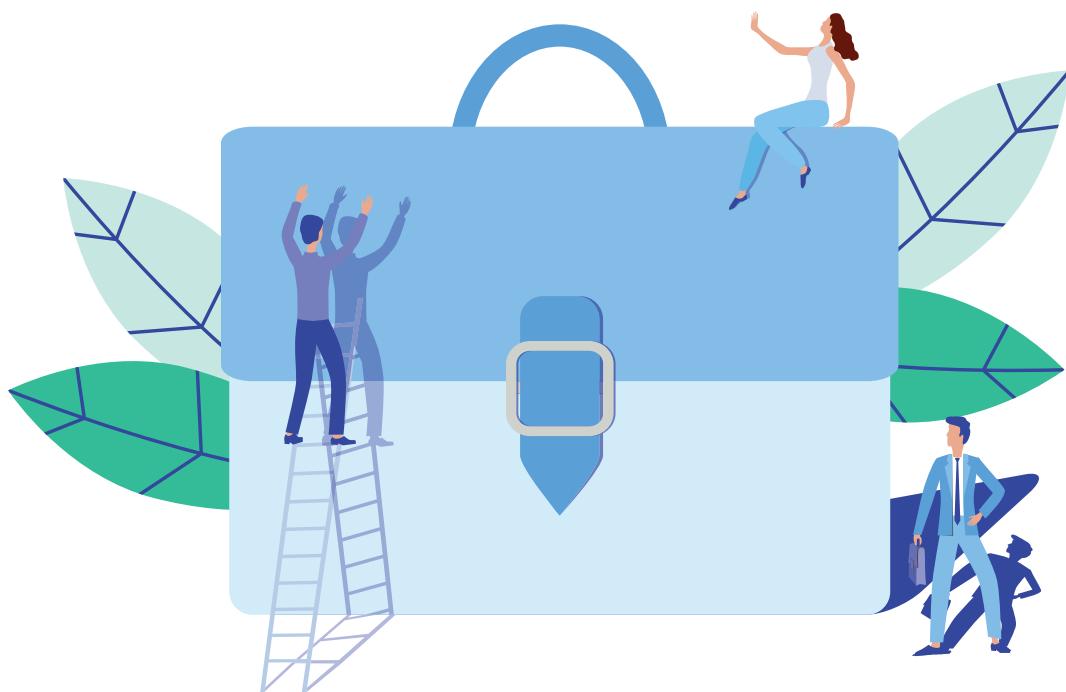
Labour Market Data (Latest figures)

- Female employment rate (ages 20–64): 77.2% (2023) – [Federal Employment Agency](#)
- Male employment rate (ages 20–64): approx. 85% (2023) – [Federal Employment Agency](#)

- Gender employment gap: 7.1% (2024) - [WSI](#)
- Adjusted gender pay gap: 6% (2023) - [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#)

Policy Strategies & Legislation

- The **General Equal Treatment Act (AGG)** prohibits gender-based discrimination in working life.
- Federal and state gender equality laws** require public administration to actively promote equal opportunities, e.g., gender equality plans or gender-neutral job advertisements.
- Legal **gender quotas** for large company boards (since 2016). [DIW](#)
- National initiatives** such as the 'girls and boys days' campaign promote gender-neutral career orientation and sensitize all involved stakeholders. [Federal Employment Agency](#)





Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Germany

Practices in Career Guidance

In Germany, awareness of gender roles and their impact on career choice is increasingly gaining importance. Career advisers, teachers, and employment agency professionals are becoming increasingly capable of providing gender-sensitive guidance through targeted training programmes, such as gender competence qualifications offered by the Federal Employment Agency. The aim is to challenge stereotypical career choice patterns and enable young people and adults to select according to their individual interests rather than traditional gender roles. Initiatives such as the "Klischeefrei" (Stereotype-free) campaign provide practical materials and networking opportunities to promote sustainable gender-equitable guidance. Additionally, regional projects and federal programmes provide comprehensive information to educators, advisers, and multipliers, emphasising gender-sensitive career orientation. [Hans-Böckler Foundation](#)



Challenges and Barriers

Nevertheless, studies reveal that **gender roles and societal expectations** still exert a strong influence. Stereotypical views for example, women tending to choose caring professions and men favouring technical or manual jobs deeply shape career decisions. Young people often face **social pressure** to conform to these role expectations, which restricts their freedom of choice. **Concerns about disadvantages in partnerships** or dating due to non-traditional career choices are also documented. Moreover, access to **gender-sensitive guidance differs considerably** because qualifications among professionals are not yet uniformly mandatory. **Regional disparities** also exist **in the design and availability of advisory services**. [Conference of Ministers for Gender Equality of the German Federal States](#)



Recent Initiatives and Networks

Key instruments to promote gender equality in career orientation include the nationwide "Klischeefrei" initiative and the **Girls' Day** and **Boys' Day** events. These activities offer practical insights into non-traditional career fields and raise broad awareness. **Regional projects** such as the EU-funded DIANA project actively support young people in Baden-Württemberg to make gender-sensitive career choices. The **Federal Employment Agency is increasingly integrating gender aspects into its advisory and training programmes**. Furthermore, gender competence training for advisers is becoming standard, promoting the embedding of gender-sensitive guidance as routine practice. [Conference of Ministers for Gender Equality of the German Federal States](#)





Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

From interviews and conversations with career guidance professionals, vocational trainers, and HR practitioners, it became clear that awareness of gender sensitivity in career guidance has grown significantly over recent years. The professionals shared that there has been steady progress in raising consciousness about gender biases and stereotypes. At the same time, they highlighted ongoing challenges such as integrating gender-sensitive approaches consistently into daily practice and the uneven availability of relevant training opportunities. Many confirmed that gender-sensitive guidance plays a vital role in helping young people and adults from diverse educational and social backgrounds to question traditional career norms and explore new possibilities.

Good practices

As mentioned above the leading nationwide initiatives are **Girls' Day**, **Boys' Day**, and the **Initiative Klischeefrei** these form the cornerstone of efforts to combat gender stereotypes in career choice in Germany.

- The **Initiative Klischeefrei** offers tools, workshops, and networking for educators, career advisors, and multipliers to foster stereotype-free career and study choices. Supported by multiple ministries, the Federal Employment Agency, trade unions, and businesses, it works to broaden the career horizons of young people beyond traditional gender roles.
- The annual **Girls' Day** and **Boys' Day** provide practical, hands-on exposure to careers where one gender is underrepresented. These days attract hundreds of thousands of students nationwide and are widely recognised as Europe's largest events for stereotype-free career orientation. They also serve as key platforms for companies to engage with future talent while providing inspiring role models to participants.



Conclusions & Recommendations

Germany has made significant progress in embedding gender sensitivity within career guidance. Awareness among career professionals is increasing, supported by strong nationwide initiatives such as Girls' Day, Boys' Day, and the Initiative Klischeefrei, which together challenge traditional gender stereotypes in career choices. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent application of gender-sensitive practices across all regions and institutions, and in providing equitable access to gender competence training. Social norms and gender role expectations still notably influence career decisions, especially among youth from diverse educational and social backgrounds.

Recommendations for Integrating the Toolkit

The GUIDE Toolkit offers a valuable complement to Germany's existing approaches by providing structured and practical resources that support stereotype-free career counselling. Integration into ongoing professional training for career advisors, educators, and vocational trainers is recommended. The Toolkit should be adapted linguistically and culturally to reflect German contexts and terminology familiar from established initiatives like Klischeefrei. Special emphasis should be placed on engaging underserved regions and fostering cooperation between agencies, schools, and employers. Pilot implementations and feedback loops will help tailor the Toolkit to local needs, encouraging broad acceptance and sustained use.

How This Annex Complements the GUIDE Toolkit

This annex contextualises the Toolkit within the German setting by detailing current policies, challenges, and best practices. By incorporating stakeholder perspectives and flagging flagship initiatives, it enriches the Toolkit's relevance and applicability. Together, they empower professionals in Germany to support careers based on interest and ability, not gender.

GSCG Toolkit Annex the Netherlands

Overview in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is widely recognized for its progressive stance on equality and social inclusion, which also extends to education and career guidance. Career orientation in Dutch schools and vocational institutions is strongly learner-centered, encouraging students to reflect on personal interests and competences when making educational and professional choices. This creates fertile ground for integrating gender-sensitive approaches that challenge traditional role expectations.

The Dutch labor market shows a relatively high female participation rate (around 74% for ages 20–64), yet horizontal segregation persists: women remain concentrated in education, care, and service sectors, while men dominate technical, ICT, and engineering

professions. The gender pay gap, although narrowing, remains at roughly 13% (CBS, 2023), and women are underrepresented in senior management positions.

Policy frameworks strongly support gender equality. The Dutch Emancipation Policy and initiatives by the [Ministry of Education, Culture and Science](#) promote equal opportunities in education and the labor market, reduce systemic bias, and encourage participation of underrepresented groups. Campaigns such as [Girls' Day NL](#) and national programs like [Techniekpact](#) aim to broaden career choices beyond traditional gender roles. Together, these measures create a solid policy foundation for integrating gender-sensitive career guidance into practice.





Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in the Netherlands



Practices in Place

Career guidance in the Netherlands is rooted in the principle of **learner autonomy** and is embedded in both general and vocational education through **Loopbaanoriëntatie en -begeleiding (LOB)**, a national framework encouraging students to reflect on interests, skills, and ambitions. This system lends itself well to integrating gender-sensitive approaches, as it prioritizes individualized pathways over prescriptive career tracks. Schools, VET institutions, and universities typically use a mix of portfolio assignments, reflection exercises, and one-to-one coaching to guide students' choices.

Many practitioners are already aware of the importance of diversity and inclusion, with some schools explicitly training staff on unconscious bias and gender awareness. Guidance professionals report using tools such as role model campaigns, company visits, and mentoring programs to help students see beyond traditional stereotypes. Public employment services, including UWV, also contribute by offering counseling and labor market information aimed at promoting equal opportunities.



Challenges Identified

Despite these strengths, several challenges remain:

- **Persistent Gender Segregation:** Women continue to be overrepresented in care, education, and service professions, while men dominate technical, ICT, and engineering sectors.
- **Unconscious Bias:** Guidance professionals and educators, despite good intentions, sometimes reinforce stereotypes through subtle expectations or limited exposure to non-traditional role models.
- **Uneven Implementation:** The quality and depth of gender-sensitive guidance varies by school or region, as there is no mandatory national standard for integrating gender sensitivity in career counseling training.
- **Limited Resources:** Smaller schools and training centers may lack access to up-to-date teaching materials or external experts to support a fully gender-sensitive approach.

These barriers can restrict students' freedom to explore careers aligned with their true interests, perpetuating gendered patterns in education and work.



Recent Initiatives

Several initiatives aim to address these issues:

- **Girls' Day NL:** Annual nationwide event connecting girls aged 10–15 with STEM companies, offering hands-on experience and female role models.
- **Techniekpact:** Public–private partnership designed to close the gap between demand and supply of technical talent, with a focus on encouraging girls and young women into STEM careers.
- **Diversity and Inclusion in Teacher Training:** Dutch teacher training institutes are increasingly embedding modules on gender sensitivity and bias awareness, equipping future educators with the tools to foster inclusive guidance practices.
- **Municipal and Regional Projects:** Local governments partner with industry and NGOs to create mentorship programs, promote diversity in apprenticeships, and organize career orientation events featuring professionals from underrepresented genders.

These initiatives contribute to a growing ecosystem that encourages more balanced career decision-making. However, there is still a need for systematic adoption and broader dissemination of gender-sensitive guidance practices across all regions and educational levels.



Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

Practitioner Feedback

Career counsellors, VET trainers, and HR professionals who participated in the piloting of the GSCG Toolkit reported a generally positive experience. They highlighted its clarity, practical relevance, and adaptability to different school and organizational contexts. Many practitioners saw value in the Toolkit's theoretical foundation, which helped them reflect on their own assumptions and biases when advising students. Several suggested that the Toolkit could serve as a training and awareness-raising resource for entire guidance teams, enabling schools to adopt a more coordinated approach.

Practitioners also emphasized the importance of connecting the Toolkit to real-life labor market data and local examples to increase its resonance. They saw potential to integrate the Toolkit into staff meetings, professional development sessions, and career days to normalize discussions around gender sensitivity.

"The Toolkit makes us look critically at how we talk to students. We realized that even small comments can steer them toward traditional choices." – Secondary school counsellor, Utrecht

"It gives a framework that we can share with colleagues so gender equality becomes part of the whole school culture." – VET career coach, Rotterdam

Good practices

- **Girls' Day NL**

Organized annually by VHTO this event introduces girls aged 10–15 to technical and ICT professions by facilitating visits to companies and research institutes. Girls engage in practical workshops, meet female role models, and gain first-hand experience of non-traditional career paths. This hands-on exposure is widely cited as effective in challenging stereotypes and sparking interest in STEM fields.

- **LOB (Loopbaanoriëntatie en -begeleiding) Framework**

Implemented nationwide, LOB supports students in reflecting on personal interests and building portfolios that guide educational and career decisions. Many schools enhance LOB with gender-sensitive activities, such as mentorship programs, mixed-gender project work, and guest lectures from professionals in underrepresented sectors. Resources and best practices are shared via Expertisepunt LOB helping schools continually improve their guidance approach.

Together, these practices demonstrate that combining structured reflection with exposure to role models can significantly broaden students' perceptions of what is possible, helping them make career choices free of gender constraints.





Conclusions & Recommendations

The piloting of the GSCG Toolkit in the Netherlands confirmed that it is a **relevant, user-friendly, and practical resource** for strengthening gender-sensitive career guidance. Practitioners appreciated its structured approach, theoretical grounding, and actionable exercises. At the same time, they identified a need for local adaptation to ensure cultural resonance, including Dutch case studies, terminology, and references to national education and labor market policies.

Recommendations for Integration:

- **Localize content** with Dutch examples, labor market data, and policy references to improve relevance.
- **Embed the Toolkit** into teacher training curricula, VET programs, and continuing professional development for counselors.
- **Use digital platforms** (e.g., Wikiwijs) to increase accessibility and promote collaborative learning across schools and regions.
- **Establish feedback loops** to gather user input and update the Toolkit regularly, ensuring it remains aligned with changing societal and labor market dynamics.

Complementarity with the GUIDE Toolkit:

This annex positions the Toolkit within the Dutch educational and policy landscape, bridging theory and practice. By connecting it with ongoing national initiatives such as *Girls' Day NL* and *Techniekpact*, it strengthens the impact of the GUIDE project and supports a systemic shift toward **inclusive, gender-balanced career choices** for all learners.





GSCG Toolkit Annex Spain

Overview in Spain

Spain has a solid framework for gender equality, with dedicated state structures (Ministry of Equality, Government Delegation against Gender Violence, network of Equality Units) that implement cross-cutting equality policies in the fields of education, employment, and science. Organic Law 3/2007 on effective equality between women and men and the LOMLOE (2020) – which incorporates principles of coeducation, equity, and inclusion – recognize the importance of ensuring equal opportunities in the education system. In addition, in March 2022, the government approved the Third Strategic Plan for Effective Equality between Women and Men 2022-2025 (PEIEMH), the main roadmap for public equality policies during that period.

Key facts about the labor market and gender

- Employment rate (full-time equivalent, FTE, 2022): 43% for women compared to 57% for men.
- Overall labor force participation rate (2024): women 52.6% vs. men 62.4%.

- Women's employment is more temporary ($\approx 25.6\%$) and part-time (22.3%) than men's (22.9% and 6.8% respectively), and they also have lower average annual incomes ($\approx \text{€}21,011$ vs. $\text{€}26,738$).
- Youth unemployment (February 2025) affects young women more: 27.6% for women and 23.8% for men.

Relevant policies and strategies

- The LOMLOE promotes cross-cutting and inclusive approaches, fostering equality and personalization of learning.
- The PEIEMH 2022–2025 promotes interventions in professional development, work-life balance, shared responsibility, and training.
- In the university and research sphere, there are specific efforts to promote equality: the Equality Unit of the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the CSIC equality seal, and the integration of the gender approach in evaluation, accreditation, teacher accreditation, and training.

Gender-Sensitive Career Guidance Current State in Spain

 Career guidance in Spain is provided in schools, universities, and public employment services (SEPE). Although there is a co-education framework that recognizes the importance of gender equality, this perspective is not yet fully integrated into the system: there is no mandatory training for guidance staff, and many of the actions depend on local projects or specific initiatives promoted by certain institutions. There are courses on equality in the workplace and some specific modules in vocational training and at university, but their presence is scattered and lacks a systematic approach.

This situation highlights several challenges. First, the lack of mandatory gender training for guidance counselors limits their ability to identify and counteract stereotypes in professional decision-making. Added to this is persistent occupational segregation, which keeps women concentrated in areas such as the humanities, care, and health, while men predominate in technical, STEM, and construction sectors. There are also regional inequalities, as the implementation of coeducation policies varies considerably between autonomous communities. Finally, the system suffers from weak monitoring: there are no clear indicators or evaluation mechanisms in place to systematically measure the degree of integration of the gender perspective in career guidance.

Recent initiatives



- Camino al empleo* (Paracuellos de Jarama, 2025): career paths and job training for women.
- Efigy Girls* (Naturgy Foundation): promoting STEAM careers among girls aged 10–16.
- Activa Nord* (Alicante): guidance and training with priority given to women and vulnerable groups.
- Adalab*: technology school that trains women in programming and data, with high job placement rates.
- Calí Program* (Secretariado Gitano Foundation): empowerment and job placement for gypsy women.
- Mentoring and visibility networks: Women and Engineering, STEM Talent Girl, AEMENER (energy), and the DIE Network of companies committed to equality.



Stakeholder Perspectives & Good Practices

The interviews conducted as part of the project (WP2) reveal a shared perception: career guidance in Spain still does not systematically incorporate a gender perspective. School counselors point out that they have general coeducation materials, but no practical guides adapted to vocational guidance. Vocational training instructors emphasize that gender segregation in enrollment remains highly visible (boys in mechanics and technology, girls in health and social services). Human resources professionals agree that stereotypes influence the selection of candidates and the self-perception of skills: "Many young women do not apply for technical positions even though they meet the requirements because they do not see themselves in that role."

Examples of good practices

- Women and Engineering (Royal Academy of Engineering): a well-established mentoring program that raises the profile of female role models in STEM careers. High school and university students receive support from professional female engineers, which improves their motivation and expectations. Internal evaluations indicate an increase in the number of participants choosing technical studies.
- Adalab: a social programming school that trains women in web development and data analysis. It offers intensive training, career guidance, and support in finding employment. With placement rates close to 90%, it has become a benchmark for gender-sensitive guidance in the digital field.



Conclusions & Recommendations

Spain has a solid legal framework for equality and coeducation, as well as multiple programs and initiatives to reduce occupational segregation and promote STEM careers among women and care professions among men. However, the gender perspective in career guidance is not systematized: there is a lack of mandatory training for guidance counselors, stereotypes persist in decision-making, and the monitoring of results is limited and uneven across autonomous communities.

Recommendations for integrating the Toolkit

- Mandatory basic training in guidance with a gender perspective for professionals in education, vocational training, and employment services.
- Simple audits of guidance materials in educational centers and employment offices to detect and correct biases.
- National database of role models (women in STEM, men in care) accessible to counselors and students.
- Role-swapping activities (girls in technical workshops, boys in care) as a practical awareness-raising strategy.
- Common indicators at the state level (e.g., % of students considering non-traditional options, enrollment rates in gender-segregated studies) to monitor progress.





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