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# Self-Study-Manual

ReachOut to the 'Left Behind'.  
Improving guidance for working persons  
from the underprivileged milieu.

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# Introduction to the Self-Study-Manual

## What is it about? The Challenge

The labour market is facing challenges due to megatrends such as globalisation, digitalisation, climate change, and demographic changes. These changes affect the economy, labour market structure, industrial relations, and work proportions, increasing the balance between flexibility and security. Education is becoming a crucial determinant of employment and career. Lifelong learning is essential for career success, but it is influenced by labour market situations and individual employee situations. Access to continued information and educational guidance is seen as comparative advantages, but underprivileged individuals face significant barriers to lifelong education and training. This project focuses on working persons from underprivileged environments, who have less stable work and limited access to education and guidance.

The ReachOut project is also addressing the issue of reaching out to the 'left behind'. We want to figure out:

- How can we support the connectivity of educational guidance offers to persons from the underprivileged milieus?
- How can we create counselling settings/ formats/ approaches agreeing to persons from underprivileged milieus?
- Building on the habitus approach of Pierre Bourdieu: How can we consider and address in our guidance offers the fundamentally different habitus of persons from underprivileged milieus and the habitus of guidance practitioners coming from the middle strata of society?
- To sum up: How can we support habitus sensitivity in offers of educational guidance?

## The Erasmus+ Project ReachOut

Responding to the challenges outlined above, the Erasmus+ funded project ReachOut (2022 – 2024):

- **aims to** increase demand and take-up of adult education through effective outreach, guidance, and motivation strategies.
- **focuses on** the needs of working persons from the prime working age with less stable forms of gainful work (e.g., fragmented, precarious, low paid, marginal, partly declared) and a certain distance to education and guidance and some of which have migration background.
- **raises** the question of the 'connectivity' of educational guidance to the guidance clients and asks how habitus sensitivity can be supported in offers of guidance.
- **addresses** guidance practitioners and their organisations.
- **publishes** three project outputs for the use of guidance practitioners and other stakeholders:

The project is working with three main **target groups** (direct and indirect) to improve the situation in educational guidance for the underprivileged milieu:

A/ **Guidance Practitioners** and their organisations, who are confronted with the challenges of working with persons from the underprivileged milieu, whose habitus differs greatly from that of the guidance practitioners themselves (e.g., due to their educational background).

**B/ Working persons from the underprivileged milieu**, who have a less stable form of gainful work (e.g., fragmented, precarious, low paid, marginal, partly declared).

**C/ Governing Actors** on regional, national, and European level. For example, stakeholders responsible for educational guidance and training and stakeholders like policy actors in the field of strategic programme development and funding.

The project is implemented by a European consortium consisting of institutions with long-standing expertise in the field of educational guidance, labour market and education policy, policy analysis, consulting, and scientific research:

ÖSB Social Innovation  
(Austria)



Andragoški center Republike Slovenije (ACS)  
(Slovenia)



Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung (bbb)  
(Germany)



Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí  
(VÚPSV) (Czech Republic)



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# 1. Theoretical Background

## 1.1. Introduction

In this chapter we present the theoretical background for habitus sensitive guidance, with special focus on educational and career guidance, outreach approaches and developing the competences of counsellors to support working persons from underprivileged milieu to become more involved in life-long learning and career development.



### Questions for self-reflection:

Do you know about the theory behind habitus sensitive guidance?

Do you use outreach approaches in your work?

Which competences for educational and career guidance are the most important for you nowadays?

And which of these are the most important for habitus sensitive guidance?

## 1.2. Theoretical background of habitus in adult education and guidance

We work with the concept of milieu because it is better able to capture the richness of our diverse society, social heterogeneity and diversity than classic models such as class or population stratum. Quite a few of these studies conclude that apparently the everyday reality of people – preferences, interests, habits – determine milieu membership much more strongly than socio-economic conditions (Gieseke, Käßlinger 2023, 45):

*“Social milieus group together people who at least resemble each other in terms of lifestyle and way of life, i.e., they form units within society in a certain way. On the one hand, the milieus are hierarchically ordered according to occupational status and income, but on the other hand, they are also horizontally juxtaposed if one focuses on the lifestyles and the experiential goals of the different milieus that can be communicatively produced” (Barz/Tippelt 2009, 125f)*

The orientation towards milieus thus not only encompasses the objective individual data, but also captures the perspective of the subjects (Bremer 2017a, 2017b). Milieus “stand for the way of life, the everyday level of class practice, which is based on a certain habitus” (ibid<sup>2</sup>). Habitus is understood as an ensemble of dispositions, attitudes, and preferences. Bourdieu understands habitus as internalized history, “which has become second nature, social necessity transformed into motoric schemata and bodily automatisms, which makes itself felt in the practices and representations of the individual” (Bönisch in Horn 2011, 13<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Authors translation

<sup>2</sup> Authors translation

<sup>3</sup> Authors translation

Habitus as a concept is interesting/relevant for researchers and practitioners in the guidance field because it accounts all the social aspects of decisions regarding education and/or career paths from adolescence to adulthood. Furthermore, the educational system is reproducing inequalities on a relatively high level. The concept is based on Pierre Bourdieu (2010), who defines habitus as a 'social subjectivity' revealing how the collective or social environment is embedded in people's everyday thinking and being; therefore, the human mind could be described as socially structured.

The **habitus** is a person's basic attitude to the world and to himself, his belonging to a certain group and the "imprint" he (or she) has experienced through this belonging (Bourdieu 1987). With Bourdieu, one can say that social milieus are produced by a certain "habitus". A distinction is made between the **primary habitus** of the milieu of origin and the **secondary habitus**, which is learned during later accumulation processes. Social milieus can be understood as groups of people with similar lifestyles (Vester et al. 2001). People of a milieu resemble each other in their preferences and attitudes towards work and education, family and friends, leisure time and social participation (Bremer 2017a, 2017b).

Bourdieu argues that the habitus is shared between people who have similar backgrounds like for example many aspects of social experience are shared; people of the same social class, ethnicity, gender or nationality share background information and therefore have a similar habitus; this idea helps understand why people with similar class backgrounds often think, act and make decisions in similar ways – e.g. about taking A-levels and going to university.

The challenge for educational guidance with more educationally distant milieus arises from the confrontation of the **primary habitus** with the institutional culture of a guidance institution, which is shaped by other educational milieus. "The discrepancy between everyday culture and institutional culture (in simplified terms, one can also speak of home game or away game) requires a kind of bridging work that learners have to perform" (Bremer 2017, 2<sup>4</sup>). For educationally disadvantaged milieus in particular, this bridging work is often not feasible because what needs to be bridged seems too daunting and the expectation of being understood and there is often a lack of expectation to be understood on the other side of the bridge. Individuals' previous experiences with the culture of institutional education seem to confirm this resigned view of improving living conditions through education.

The head of a large adult education centre describes that insufficient sensitivity to habitus is still a problem in counselling, but also in other practices of adult education: "Perhaps some of us – in the bubble of the educated bourgeoisie – lack knowledge of and sensitivity for people with completely different life plans, from other milieus, with a different colloquial language, other preferences, and other habits. And perhaps a subtle (academic) pride of place sometimes plays a role. In any case, according to my observations, this and that contributes not insignificantly to the fact that we find it difficult to reach certain target groups" (Gieseke, Käßplinger 2023, 48).

As the following table shows, basic motivational structures and expectations of education and access to education (amongst others by taking up offers of educational guidance and counselling) differ according to milieus and require specific strategies for addressing them.

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<sup>4</sup> Authors translation

**Table 1: Social milieus – basic forms of educational strategies**

	<i>Basic patterns of educational motivation</i>	<i>Basic principles of the education strategy</i>	<i>Educational practice and access to education</i>
<b>Upper milieu</b>	<i>Self-realization and identity</i>	<i>Social and cultural hegemony</i>	<i>Intrinsic Self-confident Active seeking</i>
<b>Respectable milieu</b>	<i>Usefulness and recognition</i>	<i>(more) autonomy / status</i>	<i>Pragmatic horizon broadening Ambivalence: Dismissal Participation via social networks or Opportunity</i>
<b>Underprivileged milieu</b>	<i>Necessity and keeping up</i>	<i>Avoiding exclusion</i>	<i>Education as a burden Uncertainty Self-exclusion ('away game') Outreach</i>

Diane Reay (2001), for example, argues that the subjects taught in schools and therefore established forms of attitudes, knowledge, and values (so called 'cultural capital') are not considered as personally desirable and important in (lower income) working-class cultures. Of course, there are plenty of middle-class students who do very well in school and perhaps even in academia. Nevertheless, it is argued that the 'rising stars' do not feel as comfortable because they lack familiarity with many aspects of the 'elite'. Habitus is inculcated by experience more than direct learning or anything similar. Habitus is thus dominated by one's own background, by one's being born into a social class.

The behaviour determined by the habitus rarely occurs on a conscious level. Mostly they are pre-conscious behavioural patterns that are continued repeatedly. Therefore, habitus sensitive concepts in the guidance system are required. Educators need a discerning approach to reach out to individuals from all social groups and milieus with different backgrounds. As literature shows, the educational system and schools count as generative spaces for habitus, because students are directly and indirectly imparted with patterns of thinking and being (see e.g., Stahl 2015). Habitus divides people into different social groups.

According to Bourdieu, the educational system encourages and rewards certain habits and assets – those associated with power/high income/high status – while ignoring and devaluing the assets of lower/low-income classes and/or milieus. For him, this social inequality is reinforced by the education system. The habitus and cultural capital of the elite is continuously upheld while the habitus and cultural capital of the lower/low-income classes and/or milieus are systematically devalued.

Promoting this habitus sensitivity is a central goal of the ReachOut project. It is a basic prerequisite for being able to reach the targeted group of low-skilled persons for counselling and educational offers.

### 1.3. Definition of guidance

In the project at hand, we refer to the definition of “educational guidance” respective “career guidance” as pointed out by Tristram Hooley, Ronald Sultana and Rie Thomsen:

*“Career guidance supports individuals and groups to discover more about work, leisure and learning and to consider their place in the world and plan for their futures. Key to this is developing individual and community capacity to analyse and problematise assumptions and power relations, to network and build solidarity and to create new and shared opportunities. It empowers individuals and groups to struggle within the world as it is and to imagine the world as it could be. Career guidance can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions. But at its heart it is a purposeful learning opportunity which supports individuals and groups to consider and reconsider work, leisure and learning in the light of new information and experiences and to take both individual and collective action as a result of this.” (Hooley et al. 2018, 20).*

The second one is the “official” definition of the EU:

*“The definition of guidance as referring to a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used”. (European Council 2004, 2008).*

Guidance symbolizes a process and involves a person with an individual problem or decision and a person which offers assistance and advice; the art/form of assistance and advice varies from situation to situation – therefore we could describe different types of guidance:

- career guidance,
- educational guidance,
- vocational guidance,
- recreational guidance,
- civic guidance,
- community service guidance,
- social and moral guidance,
- health guidance,
- leadership guidance etc.

The Project ReachOut focuses on educational and career guidance with the key goal, to raise the level of inclusion in education and training of working people from underprivileged milieu. There are some specifics concerning the content when the focus is on educational guidance; Nevertheless, it is most often interlinked with career guidance.

### 1.4. Definition of outreach as a method and different approaches

In the search for approaches for greater and more efficient reaching of adults who are not involved in education, outreach approaches were developed in England in the 1990s, which later spread to other European countries. They proved to be very effective and are today published in



recommendations in European (e.g. A New European Agenda for Adult Learning – NEAAL, 2021) and national strategic documents (e.g. Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan in the Republic of Slovenia for the 2022-2030 period – ReAEMP22-30, 2022) for reaching adults and increasing their involvement in lifelong learning or implementing projects via EAAL, where National pedagogical Institute promote synergies between actors involved in adult education and learning and raising awareness of adult learning. This is done through the two-year European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) project (finishing in December 2023).

The initial purpose of developing and implementing outreach in adult education was (McGivney, 2002)<sup>5</sup>:

- to bring the offer of adult education closer to adults in smaller towns and organizations where they socialize that are not necessarily educational organizations, and
- to adapt the content of educational programs to the needs and characteristics of different groups of adults, based on their needs and the needs of the environment in which they live.

Several different definitions of outreach activities can be found in the professional literature, among which, in adult education, the dominant ones are that "...outreach means reaching out to less educated and low-qualified adults in various ways, with which they are made aware and familiarized with the benefits of education and learning" (Eurydice report 2015, 98).

As we have already written, certain groups of people in society lack power and representation due to several factors including education, age, employment status, cultural prejudices, discrimination, and inequality. Therefore, beside outreach the empowerment is also important. Again, it is not about handing power over to these groups in a paternalistic fashion but to enable them to take the power they need themselves. Hence, it is important to understand the term empowerment in this way: "...it seems difficult not to fall into the trap of a paternalistic habitus which can be summed up by the phrase 'we empower you', thus maintaining the status of powerlessness and dependence on a 'helping hand' for the groups we are working with. The content of learning must be decided upon by the learners themselves" (ibid, 2014, 9). In this context, empowerment implies providing the tools for self-empowerment and constantly being aware of the necessity of critical self-reflection on the adult educator's side as well as on the side of the learner (ibid, 2014, 9).

The experiences with outreach activities in countries participating in the ReachOut project are different. In some, recognizable approaches or models of outreach have been developed in guidance for the inclusion of employees from underprivileged milieus, which we will present in this paper, and which can be helpful in establishing new outreach approaches in the European area.

Below, we summarize some of the approaches from the examples described in national reports of the ReachOut project (2022):

- Working with peers (e.g., peers, who could improve the accessibility and/or extend the limits in educational guidance (in Slovenia for young adults); providing low-threshold educational guidance services such as outreach guidance and "educational gossip" in neighbourhoods or anything similar; the formats address people in their immediate living environment).

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<sup>5</sup> McGivney described four models of outreach activities in adult education in the English area: the "satellite model", which aims to offer education programs in the local community in smaller places, outside of large centres; "field model" that represents outreach in various organizations, which as a rule are not educational organizations, i.e. cultural institutions, libraries, hospitals, prisons, etc.; "non-institutional model" that is focused on the organization of events outside institutions, on the street, square, outdoor events, etc.; and the "home model" meaning the activity of professionals visiting adults at their homes. (McGivney, 2002)

- Workplace oriented approaches (e.g., for workshops for work counsellors (dt. Betriebsräte); guidance at the workplace (in Slovenia)).
- Social space-oriented approaches (e.g., “SEASAM” in Austria– a program where parents of kinds in preschool could work together partly).
- Community work (e.g., “Plaudertischerl” in Austria – a program against loneliness which provides a space in a café or restaurant to talk with strangers and other people).
- Outreach as a method for young people/outreaching youth work (e.g., “Partyfit” in Austria – a project for preventing alcohol addiction and consumption in the event sector; for adolescents and young adults).

### Examples

Carrying out guidance (and/or educational) activities outside the institution where the counsellor (educator) works. That is in another institution or association (usually where the target group the counsellor wants to reach is located), in a public place, at events that are important for the local environment, etc. Counsellors can work alone or connect with professionals from other (partner) organizations who know well the characteristics and needs (habitus) of the selected target group, or with an individual professional and/or volunteer who is a member of a vulnerable group, that we want to reach. “Mobile” outreach is being developed, field work involving mentors (peers) from the local community, etc. (see e.g., Eurydice 2015, 2021).

Carrying out guidance activities from the organization headquarters in such a way that the counsellor addresses the vulnerable groups, he wants to reach from the institution, in a way that is adapted, understandable and motivational to them. That can be done using different approaches, from written informative and promotional materials, short video films (successful stories of representatives from vulnerable groups), infographics, online tools and social networks.

## 1.5. Professionalism of the counsellors and counsellors’ competences for habitus sensitive guidance

For the quality of guidance and its implementation in accordance with the contents offered by the individual organization (or guidance network), the appropriate qualification of the counsellor is a key. In addition to the formal conditions prescribed in each country for counsellors, it is very important to constantly improve and upgrade the professionalism of their work. Therefore, it is very important that the tasks of the counsellors and their expected competences are clearly defined for each field of work or job post (Vilič Klenovšek, 2020).

The same applies for habitus sensitive guidance – it is very essential that counsellors develop and acquire appropriate competences to raise their awareness of habitus sensitivity and take it into account when planning and implementing the guidance process.

Based on the defined competences, counsellors can also monitor and evaluate their qualification and, in accordance with their findings, plan the development of their competencies and professionalism. The development of competences is a continuous process, just as the development of content and approaches in guidance is a continuous process. And the approaches in the training of counsellors are being updated and upgraded as well.

Competence is often misunderstood as “*the ability to do something well*” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). In Cedefop’s publication from 2009, where the practitioner competences and qualification routes in career guidance in Europe were comprehensively illuminated, the definition was broader, based on its definition in European qualifications framework (European Commission, 2005, 11):

*“Competences includes: (i) cognitive competence involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially; (ii) functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they are functioning in a given area of work, learning or social activity; (iii) personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and (iv) ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values.”* This definition represents a holistic model of understanding competence, which connects both knowledge, skills and values, as well as ethical action of a counsellor, which are intertwined.

In addition, we add some current highlights about the competences of counsellors, which are characterized by rapid economic and social development, demographic changes, migration, globalization, digitalization and the green transformation of society. At the same time, the emphasis is again on a holistic approach to human development, on greater social cohesion and care for deprived groups.

This is also pointed out in Cedefop’s publication (2021) that the modern set of competences of a counsellor, depending of course on the service setting, country context, and target groups, must reflect these changes and strategic goals for the future and include all of the following:

- *“Comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of the field of work. This includes knowledge of career theories and a good level of digital skills to navigate databases with relevant information, including emerging occupations and occupations undergoing digital transformation;*
- *mastering the latest guidance techniques, including in remote settings and via blended approaches with human intervention, collaborative methodologies and joint career planning in group sessions;*
- *advanced and guidance client-oriented written and oral communication skills, including knowledge of social media ‘netiquette’, to respond to individuals’ professional and personal needs in different guidance settings;*
- *knowledge of screening and assessment methods, to identify guidance client needs and to refer them to services to validate prior learning against valid standards;*
- *ability to work strategically within a set of cooperating community services, including outreach services<sup>6</sup>;*
- *a high level of psychological, social and emotional skills, such as to discern when individuals have special needs or face other barriers to learning and career progress, and the capacity to adhere to ethical practices according to professional standards.”* (ibid., 2021, 2).

Except of those above-mentioned competences of a counsellor, there must be a responsibility to come to guidance client with the best possible to support him/her and to challenge unconstructive and punitive approaches. That is why it pays to devote energy and time to critical reflection, which is an important part of our professional development<sup>7</sup>.

There is also a growing need for counsellor’s digital skills, for using e-materials and e-tools to support the implementation of the guidance process, as well as for providing guidance using internet tools, to which the Covid 19 pandemic has particularly contributed.

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<sup>6</sup> See the Cedefop 2019 briefing note on digital innovation supporting careers.

<sup>7</sup> EKS (2021) Cesta za horizont kariérového poradenství – kritická reflexe v praxi.

*“Today, guidance practitioners must be able to use new online tools to communicate with their guidance clients; at the same time, they must be able to find, retrieve, assess, and manage labour market data (statistics, big data) and continually incorporate this knowledge in their work. Without this capacity, they risk losing out on a central aspect of their guidance client services, the special relationship they have always had with the labour market. While big data, artificial intelligence, and innovative tools, such as chatbots, allow for dynamic, portable, and flexible approaches to career support and self-directed learning, the provision of well-informed, holistic career guidance will always go beyond the machine and require skilful human intervention. This is why blended approaches have increased. Practitioners should be better prepared to embrace the positive changes digital tools offer in combination with human interaction, according to user needs, and even participate in their development.” (ibid., 2021, 4).*

We must keep in mind all these aspects of competences of a counsellor in today’s time, when we define the competences for habitus sensitive guidance.

*At the same time, we allow ourselves a relativisation that is relevant for educational counselling practice: The listing of 12 core competences for educational and career counsellors of the IVBBB makes a problem clear. The catalogue represents the optimum of requirements that a counsellor should fulfil. The 12 core competences therefore read more like an appeal to humility, because hardly any counsellor has these competences in this complexity. If they do, there is a danger of overestimating themselves. This continues in the description of the 14 professional competences, also defined by the IVBBB. They are only partially self-explanatory. The competence requirements are supplemented by the CEDEFOP competence catalogue of 2021, which calls for, among other things, "mastering the latest guidance techniques".*

*It should be borne in mind that with these catalogues the authors provide evidence that they have taken up and received the developments in the European guidance scene on a broad scale. Such catalogues can give guidance counsellors orientation in which fields they can recognise for themselves with their competences, but also where they see a need for further training for themselves. They are not suitable as a job description of a counsellor’s activity and do not claim that every counsellor must have them at his or her disposal in their entirety.*

*Counsellor’s competences for habitus sensitive guidance are defined in Chapter 4, Guidelines.*

The constant development of the counsellor’s competences and the strengthening of his professionalism is crucial for the high-quality and efficient implementation of counselling activities. Awareness of the importance of the continuous professional development of counsellors is increasing (Mikulec, Stanovnik Perčič, 2019), whereby the importance of the counsellor’s responsibility to take care of his continuous development is increasingly emphasized.

*It is necessary to develop different approaches in the training of counsellors, with emphasis on their more active role in the process and greater opportunities for exchanging experiences and examples of good practices between counsellors, thereby learning from each other (peer-learning, job shadowing, collegial coaching, etc.).*

*(Self) reflection of their own competence and preparation of a plan for the development of competences can be another approach for counsellors to review and develop their competence.*

## 2. Case Studies

Case studies present and explain theory-based typical counselling cases in which milieus and the habitus of those seeking advice are contrasted with the milieus and habitus of the counsellors. Similar to personas (Lepzien & Leverenz 2017), case studies are fictional descriptions and “living pictures” of selected representatives of a target group.

Our Self-Study-Manual is designed to provide counsellors and guidance practitioners with a comprehensive resource for improving their practice, particularly when working with working people from underprivileged milieu. The development of this manual is based on an extensive research endeavor conducted across four participating countries (AT, DE, SI, CZ). We conducted 12 interviews with guidance practitioners and/or counsellors (one-to-one/in groups) in each country (a total of 48), all following the same structured interview guide and conducted in the respective national languages. The rich insights and data collected from these interviews formed the basis for creating case studies and field reports. Each case study is accompanied by questions for the reader’s self-reflection, and some have additional information (on country specificities measures and modus operandi, examples of good practice, references to further literature or online sources for the content described).

Personas make it easier to understand how people think, feel and act, what their goals and motivations are. They are prototypes (avatars) that help to empathically empathize with the people we want to address. “Personas are hypothetical people with specific characteristics. They represent a specific target group and help to align the development process of a project with the needs of users.” (Lepzien & Leverenz 2017<sup>8</sup>).

Different approaches to typifying new target groups in counselling often overlook their complexity. Class models provide rough approximations, while milieu studies provide more detailed depictions. Personas, which include everyday life, illustrate the diverse target groups in counselling contexts, introducing social realities beyond the counsellor’s experience and highlighting habitus differences.

The target group of counsellors for whom habitus sensitivity was important in counselling, i.e., whose habitus differed from that of the guidance clients, was found in the following spheres:

- Low-skilled employees with discontinuous employment biographies
- Precariously employed
- Unemployed people with low chances of finding work due to their age
- Employees who are in a transfer situation after insolvency or partial closure
- People who are affected by working poverty (low-income households according to EU-SILC) and who would like to continue their vocational training
- Women who work in companies in the low-wage sector (e.g., cleaning)
- Migrants and people with professional qualifications acquired abroad
- People who work in underpaid jobs after immigration and lack of language skills
- Low-skilled and marginally employed adults who are referred to counselling (and an educational program) by their employer.

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<sup>8</sup> Autor’s translation

- Educated migrant workers with less demanding jobs who need recognition of their qualifications/diplomas

## 2.1. “But if you try hard enough, you can become anything you want, right?”

Name: Ida

Age: 25 years

Short description: migration background, unrealistic expectations, and perceptions regarding employment

Ida migrated with her family from Turkey to Austria at the age of 10. Since she was a child, she has taken on a variety of tasks in the family context, ranging from caring for her younger sisters to accompanying family members to doctors' offices.

Because of her limited German skills, Ida always had a tough time talking with her classmates and teachers at school. It was always very tricky for her to join in class activities and keep up with her studies. But Ida was strong and determined. She wanted to get better at speaking German, and with the help of her teachers and language learning programs in Austria, she was working hard to improve.

Despite difficulties, Ida has tried to improve her education and skills. In her family, education and learning are not necessarily considered desirable, so Ida had mostly performed on a bare minimum. Unfortunately, she was not able to pass some school classes, which is why she had to retake some of them. Ida currently has a compulsory school leaving certificate and has completed several internships and shorter employment contracts. Mostly she was employed by relatives in restaurants. Beyond that, she had not completed any training or learned any profession during an apprenticeship.

Ida's biggest dream now is to achieve a profession in the medical field. She wants to help people. Due to her experience in caring for relatives, she believes that she has already gained some practical experience and would therefore be a suitable candidate for a medical profession. While counselling, Ida expresses her desire to become a doctor or nurse. Ida does not know how exactly to achieve or learn these jobs.

During counselling, it becomes clear that Ida's expectations do not match the realistic and, above all, achievable goals. It is difficult to convey this because Ida can hardly be dissuaded from her wishes. Her ideas and wishes are different from what can be achieved in reality.



### Additional information

In Austria, there are various German language courses specifically designed for migrants to help them integrate into society and improve communication skills. Some of the courses are offered by ÖIF (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, Austrian Integration Fund), Volkshochschule (Center/School for Adult Education) or several NGOs. Furthermore, there are so called “Deutschförderklassen” (German Support Classes) integrated in the Austrian school system, which provide German courses to migrant children and teenagers.





### Questions for self-reflection:

How do you typically respond when encountering guidance clients with beliefs that differ significantly from your professional experience?

On which typical career patterns are your counselling approaches based on?

How does the biography of a guidance client shape your conclusions in counselling situations? Could you detect rigid interpretation patterns based on your attitude towards career in your decision-making process?

## 2.2. “But that’s not a task for a woman, is it?”

Name: Amina

Age: 20 years

Short description: migration background, traditional gender roles and cultural norms because of cultural background

Amina is an ambitious young woman from Afghanistan, who now calls Austria her home. Amina’s family is a significant influencer of her habitus. Their compliance to traditional gender roles and expectations shapes her understanding of her role as a woman in society. Amina was good at school. She got good grades in all her subjects because she worked hard and loved learning, which is why she graduated with “Matura”. Her teachers were impressed with how motivated and capable she was as a student.

In the past few years, Amina took on a lot of care work because her mother was sick. She spent much of her time taking care of her mom, helping with daily tasks like cooking, cleaning, and making sure she was all right.

While Amina wants to explore various career opportunities, she finds herself hesitating to pursue certain jobs that she perceives as “not suitable” for women according to her cultural background. Despite her educational achievements and competences, she wrestles with self-imposed limitations due to the belief that some professions are better suited for men.

Her internal struggle is not uncommon, as habitus influences her perception of gender roles, shaping her understanding of what is acceptable for women in the workforce. Although Amina is aware of the progressive social environment in Austria, the weight of her traditional upbringing remains a significant factor in her decision-making process. During counselling, Amina feels defensive and protective of her cultural beliefs, leading her to resist the counsellor’s suggestions. She expresses that certain jobs are not appropriate for her.



### Additional information

“Matura”, commonly known as the final school-leaving exam in Austria and comparable with a high school diploma, assesses students’ knowledge and understanding across multiple subjects. Successfully passing the “Matura” is a significant achievement, granting students access

to higher education opportunities and opening doors to pursue their chosen academic and professional pathways.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Are you aware of any personal biases or prejudices that might affect your interactions with guidance clients from different cultural backgrounds?

How do you adapt your counselling techniques to accommodate guidance clients with diverse cultural norms and communication styles?

Describe an experience when you recognized and challenged your own cultural assumptions during a counselling session.

### 2.3. “Only hard work is real work!”

Name: Thomas

Age: 45 years

Short description: distance and negative attitudes toward counselling, (formal) education and learning

Thomas is middle-aged man from Austria who always thinks and acts differently from others. Growing up in a modest background, Thomas' family didn't prioritize education, focusing instead on practical skills and hard work. Consequently, he never fully embraced the idea of going to school or pursuing higher education. Thomas left school as soon as it was possible. After that, he worked on and off as an unskilled laborer in manual jobs. He did not want to take up an apprenticeship – despite “Schulpflicht”. As he reached adulthood, Thomas found success in various manual labor jobs, reinforcing his belief that education was unnecessary.

For years, Thomas has firmly believed that education and everything associated with it are meaningless and not worth pursuing. This belief is at the core of his habitus-related problem.

Education varies depending on social backgrounds and the educational behavior of individuals, which means people have different attitudes towards learning. These attitudes are shaped by various factors, such as learning styles, perspectives, barriers, experiences, and expectations related to education and learning (Bremer 2007).

As Thomas grew older, he looked for jobs that matched the skills he had learned and what he believed in. He chose to work in manual labor, and he did well in those jobs. This made him more convinced that going to school wasn't important. But because of this belief, he had fewer choices for his career and struggled with money since he didn't have the qualifications for other kinds of work that could have helped him grow personally and professionally.

However, Thomas' aversion to education has had consequences in his personal and professional life. He has faced limited career growth and financial stability due to the lack of qualifications.



Furthermore, he often struggles to connect with others who have different educational backgrounds, leading to feelings of inadequacy and isolation.



#### Additional information

In Austria, “Schulpflicht” refers to compulsory education, which means that every child must attend school for 9 years. “Schulpflicht” is an essential part of the Austrian education system, and it aims to ensure that all children receive an education and could develop academically and socially.

In Austria “Ausbildungspflicht” means that young people are required to get an education or training until 18 years old. This rule helps make sure that everyone has the chance to learn and develop important skills for their future.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Are you aware of any biases or assumptions you hold about individuals who did not pursue education? How could these beliefs impact your counselling?

How could you support Thomas in developing a growth mindset towards education, recognizing that it's never too late to pursue learning opportunities?

## 2.4. Rediscovering value

Name: Ulrike

Age: 45 years

Short description: long break from the labor market, re-entry, little self-confidence in own competencies

Ulrike is a caring woman from Austria who spent many years taking care of her children as a stay-at-home mother/housewife. Now, she wants to go back to gainful work after a long break. She feels it's time to have her own career and do something she enjoys. But she feels like she's not good enough and can't do anything valuable in a job because she has been away from work for so long.

In the past, Ulrike may have encountered societal expectations and messages that devalue the role of stay-at-home mothers/housewives in the workplace. These messages contribute to her habitus, leading her to believe that her caregiving experience is not seen as valuable or transferable to other job roles. Ulrike's habitus, the way she thinks about herself, makes her doubt her skills. She believes that her caregiving experience at home doesn't count as important or useful in a job. She thinks her abilities are not up to date and can't be applied to a job.

Ulrike is currently working in a job that pays very little. Even though the job isn't great, she feels surprisingly happy about it. This happiness is because of her low self-esteem. Ulrike doesn't believe she deserves a better job or higher pay, so she settles for less. She doesn't realize her true worth and potential, and this affects the choices she makes in her career. Additionally, societal attitudes

and stereotypes can impact the perception of housewives, leading to potential undervaluation of their work and roles. In counselling, the focus is on empowering Ulrike to recognize her unique strengths and the transferable skills she gained during her time as a caregiver.



#### Additional information

“Elternkarenz” in Austria is a special time when parents can take a break from work to take care of their baby. There are different “Elternkarenzmodelle”, or models of parental leave that parents can choose from based on their needs. One common model is the “klassische Karenz,” where one parent takes a longer break from work to care for the child. Another model is the “partnerschaftliche Karenz,” where both parents share the time off and care for the child together.

After “Elternkarenz” it is possible to stay at home to be a housewife which means they focus on taking care of their home and family instead of having a job outside. Housewives who are not employed outside the home can be eligible for certain social benefits through their spouse’s employment, such as access to healthcare coverage and the spouse’s pension contributions.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

How could you create a safe and caring space where Ulrike can talk about her job situation and how she sees herself without feeling judged?

How would you help Ulrike to see her value and skills, so she can feel more confident about finding a better job?

Reflect your own attitude towards gender roles and the distribution of caring and gainful work.

## 2.5. “I simply want a good job.”

Name: Jenny

Age: 26

Short description: low qualified, lost confidence in vocational training, single, single parent

Jenny lives in a small city in Northrhine-Westfalia/Germany. She has completed a helper training (Dt. “Helfer-Training”) as a kitchen specialist (also called a cook helper) She has a daughter (6 years old). The marriage did not go as she had dreamed, and she separated from her husband when her daughter was three years old. Jenny worked – her daughter had been looked after by a neighbor – for various social employers, sometimes full-time, sometimes part-time. She kept changing jobs because she felt underchallenged and wrongly employed. Instead of being allowed to help with cooking, she was only allowed to clean up, do the dishes, and fetch goods from the refrigerator.

When asked by the guidance practitioner, Jenny talks about her life: she had achieved her secondary school leaving certificate in the 9th grade, but it was clear to her that this was not a good

prerequisite for learning a profession. She is the child of a bicultural couple, father from the UK, Mother German, and she speaks English fluently in addition to German. However, according to her experience, this has not helped her much in her career. She had always been very shy and reserved when dealing with other people. She had always had problems with learning, her mother had also constantly repeated this to her. In a measure of the transition system, she gained a little more self-confidence and experienced that she could learn. This encouraged her to do the helper training. She was very popular during the training and the trainer thought she could do a lot in the kitchen. But that would have been of little use "in real life". Jenny has processed the experience of not being employed according to her qualifications and skills in a way that she is not interested in further qualification anymore. She simply wants placement in a job where she can show what she can.



#### Additional information

Helper training as a kitchen specialist is a training occupation for people with limitations. The 3-year training is carried out in the hospitality industry and in facilities with large kitchens (e.g., homes and hospitals) or in vocational rehabilitation facilities. Young people can be placed in such rehabilitation training by the Employment Agency.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

How do you encourage/encourage people with other educational histories like your own to share more about their education and learning experiences?

Is knowledge about educational biographical backgrounds important in your counselling?

(How) do you address experiences of disappointment in working life (like Jenny's experience of having to work below competence)?

How do you deal with Jenny's counselling goal in your counselling?

In your view, at which points is habitus sensitivity necessary? Where do you want to understand more and better to be able to advise?

## 2.6. "This is not fair!"

Name: Klaus

Age: 64

Short description: low qualified, older, fear of old age, hostile to refugees

Klaus lives and works in a big city in Northrhine-Westfalia/Germany. He comes to the guidance provider consultation hours for a guidance.

He has been employed as a construction worker in scaffolding for decades. He is divorced and has no children. He explains right at the beginning that "they up there" are cheating him. Although he has worked all his life, he will only receive a pension of 934 euros in one year, of which 430 euros "go to rent alone".

He wants to know what kind of work will still be possible for him after retirement. He can no longer lift heavy loads because of a back problem.

But overall, he makes a fit impression, but seems bitter and blames “politics”, which “makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Only the refugees, they are really pampered by the state and even get a mobile phone each.”



#### Questions for self-reflection:

What do such statements by a person seeking advice trigger in you as a guidance practitioner?

How do you react to his political statements? Do you ignore them because they have nothing to do with the counselee’s concerns or do you take a stand and contradict them for psycho-hygienic reasons, i.e., for self-protection?

Is it an expression of habitual sensitivity to ignore statements about refugees that are discriminatory?

Does habitus sensitivity for me also mean keeping one’s own positions to oneself because they are only indirectly related to the guidance client’s counselling concerns?

## 2.7. “Too old?”

Name: Thomas

Age: 57

Short description: many years of work experience, poorly qualified, writing and reading difficulties, in debt, threatened with loss of job

Thomas lives in a small city in Münsterland (landscape in Northrhine-Westfalia). He has worked in the warehouse/logistics sector for over 20 years, sorting and picking goods. His experience was sufficient to cope with the demands. The fact that he can hardly read and write is not noticeable. Where necessary, colleagues were able to help out.

With the digitalization in the warehouse/logistics area, he receives his work orders via tablet. As he cannot read them, his writing and reading disability can no longer be compensated for by colleagues. The employer offers to finance a literacy course for him. This takes place in the evening. Thomas accepts the offer but drops out again relatively quickly.

During counselling he says that he cannot learn enough for work. In the further course of the conversation, however, it becomes clear that the main reason for dropping out is that his part-time job, on which he depends because of his financial situation, is not compatible with the evening course. In addition, he has the impression that the progress he has made is so slow that "reading and writing won't work anymore anyway, I'm too old for that. Thomas makes it clear that he urgently needs another job.



### Questions for self-reflection:

What information do you need from the person seeking advice in order to have a solution-oriented counselling interview?

How would you address the aspect of job-related literacy with him? Or would you not address this at all? If not, why not?

In what ways would you support him in relation to his desire for a new job?

## 2.8. "I don't belong to the lower class after all!"

Name: Markus

Age: 46 years old

Short description: many years of work experience, high qualified, assets confiscated, loss of licence to practice medicine, single

Markus, born in Cologne, living in Munich, was a Doctor of Medicine with his own well-off practice, which allowed him to live in affluence and take many expensive trips. He had a whole range of luxury vehicles at his disposal. A large-scale billing fraud earned him a four-year prison sentence and the withdrawal of his licence to practise medicine. His assets were confiscated.

During counselling, he expresses the wish for a new professional start. Since his financial situation rules out studying (he has high debts and is subject to the seizure exemption limit), the counsellor discusses with him possibilities of retraining at skilled worker level. Markus is obviously upset about the prospect of being reduced to the status of a skilled worker. He believes that he has the opportunity to gain qualifications that would at least make it possible for him to reach his former status. In his words, "A man with my past and my former background cannot become lower class."



### Additional information

In Germany, people who are in debt are subject to seizure protection, the aim of which is to enable debtors in compulsory enforcement to live a life that is in keeping with human dignity and to prevent them from becoming dependent on the social security system despite compulsory enforcement. Attachment exemption limits are intended to ensure that the debtor can dispose of the minimum subsistence level even if his or her earned income is attached.

How is such a situation regulated in your country?



### Questions for self-reflection:

What could habitus-sensitive counselling look like in this case?

Is it the counsellor's task to make it clear to the guidance client that he has ruined any chance of ever regaining his old lifestyle through his misconduct?

## 2.9. “Am I a customer or am I a petitioner?”

Name: Agnieszka

Age: 39

Short description: polish, married, two children, high school diploma, work experience in Poland, cleaning worker in Germany, wants part-time vocational retraining

Agnieszka is Polish and has lived in Germany close to Frankfurt for eight years with her husband and two children (11 and 14 years old). She graduated from high school in Poland and completed a commercial apprenticeship and also worked for a short time in her skilled profession. She has a few cleaning jobs in private households in Germany to supplement the family income.

She wants to retrain, but she can only do it part-time or digitally because the family depends on her additional income. She contacts the employment agency. Within six weeks she has four interviews, but each time with different advisors, who she finds rather unfriendly and dismissive of her ideas for the future. She experiences herself as an "annoying supplicant". Her persistence leads to her being referred by the employment agency to an educational institution that offers counselling, but also conducts training and retraining itself.

The counselling interview turns out to be different from what she had hoped for. She does not meet a counsellor but finds herself in a group with twenty others who also want to retrain. The guidance practitioner from the educational institution who joins the group quickly makes it clear that individual interests and needs cannot be considered. The people seeking advice have the choice to opt for the offered retraining or not. Agnieszka is not given the opportunity to express her wish or need for a part-time qualification. Although she speaks German relatively well – she had passed the B2 exam a few months earlier – she attributes the inadequate counselling to the fact that she is not a "bio-German".

For her, the lack of habitus sensitivity that is expressed is primarily an expression of conscious or unconscious discrimination against her as a foreigner. In terms of her previous education, her literary and cultural ambitions, she habitually feels that she belongs to the middle class. She sees the disinterest of the counsellors - who habitually also belong to the middle class - in her person and her needs as an attempt to distinguish herself and assumes that she would have met with more understanding as a foreign cleaning lady who appears to need help.



### Questions for self-reflection:

Do you experience in your counselling practice that migrants who seem relatively helpless experience more empathy in counselling than those who come to counselling self-confidently and with clearly formulated interests?

Is it possible that the habitually vulnerable person is more likely to receive attention from the guidance practitioner than the habitually 'like-minded' person who does not necessarily appear to be in need?

## 2.10. “You have never done any real work in your life!”

Name: Nevenka

Age: 58 years

Short description: less educated, low literacy, distance and negative attitudes toward counselling and learning

Nevenka grew up on a small farm in a rural area of Pomurje region (Slovenia), where hard labour was valued far beyond education. Coming from a disorderly family with an alcoholic father, she struggled to finish primary school. She married young, moved to a neighbouring small town, and had two children. She never returned to education and worked on less demanding, physical jobs all her life.

She is currently working as a laundry worker in a retirement home. Her husband worked in a factory behind the production line for 30 years but had to retire due to back injury and other health problems. She cares for him and does most housework. Their income is low. Her children are grown and moved away to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. She only sees them and her grandchildren only occasionally.

She had to attend a course on health in the workplace to which she was sent by her employer, together with a group of co-workers. Before the course started, everybody had to attend individual counselling. She was not motivated, on the contrary, she saw the situation as an obligation, something that she was forced to do by her employer. She did not see the point in attending the course, since she was going to retire in the following two years, let alone attending counselling.

When Nevenka came to the first counselling session, she was extremely hostile, rude and insulting to the guidance counsellor. She was affected by revolt to attending both counselling and health course and took it out on the counsellor, saying, “What do you know, who had never done any real work in your life!”

The counsellor’s first reaction was to listen and observe through which they come to a deeper understanding of her negative attitude. Nevenka struggled with filling out the application form, which was a first sign of her literacy problems that were confirmed through the guidance process. Her fear of learning and attending came from the fact that she had not read or written anything in a long time and was afraid that her low literacy skills would show in the learning course.

After setting boundaries in communication the counsellor worked towards building a respectful relationship with Nevenka – found about her values and helped her recognize her strengths and her worth, which encouraged and motivated Nevenka to attend the course.



### Additional information

According to The Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC 2014), on average, adults in Slovenia score below the OECD average in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments.





### Questions for self-reflection:

How would you react if your guidance client was angry and resentful?

Have you ever been in a situation when your own bad experience or fear of exposure made you resentful and angry? Can you relate to Nevenka in any way?

## 2.11. “I do not need to know that!”

Name: Jože

Age: 37 years

Short description: distant from (formal) education and learning, lack of motivation – focused only on solving current situation/problem, minimal effort

Jože grew up in the small town Kresnica near Austria. His father worked in a factory, doing simple jobs, while his mother took care of the house, a small garden, and a few domestic animals, and did seasonal work. They were both hard working, and his father did most of the work and repairs around the house himself, he was also skilled at fixing cars and motorbikes, which Jože liked to help him with. He finished primary school with a lot of effort, and somehow it was considered that he was not much for books and learning.

Jože started working for a construction company immediately after finishing primary school, and during his career, he changed several employers. He gradually acquired his masonry skills through work. As he lives on the border with Austria, he understands and speaks some German. He gets on well with his colleagues - they are allies against the boss. In their eyes, the employer is the one who always wants something from them, pushes them and checks on them. Nevertheless, Jože is used to his job and is not interested in any change or promotion.

His employer wants him to acquire the dry stone waller National Occupational Qualification (NOQ) and therefore refers him to the guidance. The counsellor, in addition to the NOQ process, wants to introduce him to other training opportunities offered in the region. Through them, Jože could gain a higher level of education or other skills (e.g., computer skills) that could be useful for his work and promotion, as his experience would enable him to advance in his career and lead a team of workers.

Jože resists, he does not even want to hear about anything other than the NOQ he must obtain. Moreover, he struggles with preparing the portfolio that is part of the NOQ process, and the counsellor has to keep encouraging and motivating. Jože prepares the portfolio in the end, since it is required, but was not prepared to put in more than the minimum effort and time required.

The counsellor realises that presenting additional education and learning opportunities, even if they could help Jože towards promotion or better employment, is useless, even more, it puts Jože in a bad mood. In the end, Jože acquires the NOQ while the counsellor's efforts are toward leaving a good impression through their meetings, making Jože aware that the counsellor and the organisation are there for him at any time.





### Additional information

People living in border areas often go to work across the border, where wages are higher and working conditions are better. The employers are often reluctant to train their employees for fear that they will then look for another, better job abroad. This is particularly evident in boarder areas, where Slovenians can work abroad as commuters.



### Questions for self-reflection:

Do you think that Jože's reluctance to learn is linked to his resistance to learning or fear of change?

Why does Jože not see himself as a team leader of his colleagues?

## 2.12. "I attend courses to be in the better society!"

Name: Petra

Age: 51 years

Short description: underemployed, precarious agency worker, engages in education and learning for fun, without any effects on bettering her career chances

Petra grew up with a highly educated mother in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and later moved outside the city. She has a degree in economics, but none work experience in the field. She changed jobs frequently and spent most of her time working through an agency (precarious employment). She is currently underemployed, working through an employment agency. She works in production behind a conveyor belt, in several shifts. Due to medical problems with her arm, she is looking for another job. Her driving licence was also revoked not long ago, which makes it even harder for her to find a new job, as she lives in a less populated area without any public transport where a car is essential for everyday life.

She often comes to the guidance centre where she feels safe and has been coming back for many years, every time something goes wrong in her life.

Petra regularly asks about and is interested in free courses and workshops, which she regularly attends (e.g., the French course, even though she has not benefited from it at all). She enjoys attending courses; it makes her feel that she is in the company of "better" people. There she feels accepted, has company, rather than being home alone. She also says that the courses are a way to keep busy and to pass the time.

The counsellor helps her with looking for a new job, preparing the CV, and writing and sending the job applications and e-applications, which she is not able to do herself. So far without any concrete impact.

Although there were no direct effects of the counselling, e.g., a new, a better job or career progress, the counsellor perceives indirect, "soft" effects. Petra is more confident, grows and develops as a

person, is motivated and perseveres. In addition, she is acquiring new knowledge and developing various skills and competences in the classes, she is taking.

Although the counsellor does not see the value in Petra's attending some of the workshops or courses, or how it could benefit her in the search for another, better job, she observes and realises that socialising and learning is still having a positive impact on her life.



#### Additional information

Adult education organizations in Slovenia are committed to providing free training opportunities for adults by applying for funding through various public calls for tenders and from different sources (e.g., the European Social Fund).

Cyril O. Houle in his work *The Inquiring Mind* (1961) defined three learning orientations common to adults: goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning oriented.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Do you think that training or learning programmes must be directly related to one's situation in order to be effective?

## 2.13. "Learning is the last thing on my mind – I am being evicted!"

Name: Almina

Age: 43 years

Short description: issues to be solved before engaging in education/learning, working poor

Almina fled to Slovenia from the war in Bosnia. She came with her parents and a brother in her high school years; however, she did not finish high school. She married early and had two children but soon became a widow.

Almina came to the guidance centre at the initiative of the company where she was employed as a seamstress. In a project aimed at employees who were about to lose their jobs, employers were able to refer employees for whom redundancies were foreseen (e.g., due to downsizing) in counselling, where an individual career plan was drawn up for them. The focus was also on identification of gaps in knowledge, skills and competences and providing or finding suitable learning opportunities.

Although Almina has lived in Slovenia for a long time, she speaks Slovenian poorly, which can be an obstacle when looking for a job. Therefore, she decides to take a Slovenian language course first, and then get a higher education – finish high school.

Soon the first problem arises, as the shift work makes it difficult for her to find a course to join. However, as there is a high demand for courses to be run on a rotating basis, she soon finds one to suit her working schedule.

The course barely starts when she drops out and informs the counsellor that she can no longer attend the course as she is having bigger problems – her family is being evicted. Despite being employed, her income is not enough to support her and two children.

As the counsellor cooperates with the local Centre for Social Work on a regular basis, she offers to contact them for Almina, who is too scared and intimidated by governmental institutions and arrange a meeting on her behalf. In a relatively short time Almina informs the counsellor that they have managed to find a favourable solution, she moved to another apartment and wants to join the Slovenian language course again.

## 2.14. “You can be still fully active in the labour market as a mother”.

Name: Monika

Age: 34 years

Short description: two children – one kindergarten age, one school age, re-entering labour market after maternity/parental leave, big and not fulfilled expectations to reconcile family and working life in the same load and timing as it was before maternity/parental leave.

Monika is a woman taking care of her two children of her, girls 4 and 7 years old. She is living in North Bohemia region in the city Ústí nad Labem (Czech Republic). She graduated from the School of Economics and since then has worked in a multinational company in her place of residence as an HR specialist. Her job responsibilities have become more demanding and complex over time, which has also had an impact on her time commitment and demands. Her job responsibilities have become more demanding and complex over time, which has also affected her time commitment and demands. This did not pose a major problem; Monika enjoyed her work, and it became a big part of her life. Monika also devoted herself to further education and development of her professional skills.

Her career growth was put on hold the moment she became a mother. While Monika was on maternity or parental leave respectively, she tried to stay in touch with her employer and colleagues to be prepared to return to her position smoothly. When the younger daughter was able to attend an educational institution (kindergarten), she returned to work. Monika assumed that as long as both daughters attended kindergarten/school, she would be able to manage the original scope of work with occasional help from her husband. However, this assumption quickly proved to be unsustainable. The demanding nature of the position, combined with the unpredictability of when the children would have to stay at home – most often due to illness – was not manageable. The new situation was quite stressful for Monika and her whole family. The combination of work duties, deadlines and caring for the children and the household was becoming a very demanding discipline and Monika began to seriously consider a more radical solution to the situation than, for example, a reduction of working hours at the former employer.

When she thought about her situation, she concluded that what she lacked most at work was flexibility and the ability to actively influence when she performed her work tasks and when she spent time with her family.

Monika did try to search for a job solution with good (time) flexibility to be able to reconcile family and working life, which appear clearly during the counselling. She was used to work hard and learn new skills as well she was used to work with people, still she was not pretty sure how use this potential with kind of flexibility limitation.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

On which typical career patterns are your counselling approaches based on?

How does the biography of a guidance client shape your conclusions in counselling situations? Do you ask for additional information and could you understand rigid interpretation based on your attitude towards career in your decision-making process?

## 2.15. “Can it be a new start?”

Name: Alina

Age: 34 years

Short description: migration background, language insufficiency, material distress, unsure future

Alina is a woman from Ukraine, who fled to Czech Republic from her homeland due to the war. She escaped from her country together with her son without husband. She was supported during the first days by her sister who was already accommodated in Brno. Alina was working as a doctor in her country, and she was also holding lessons at the University where she was teaching students of medicine. She is educated and already having big experience within her profession.

In the Czech Republic she is facing several big challenges. First, it was the question of housing and secondly fixing the school for her son. Finally, it was necessary to do something about her work. The first two challenges were solved also due to the state support and support of her sister. However, the question of the professional engagement stayed open, mainly due to the language barrier and the necessary university approbation relevant for the Czech environment. So, despite her skills, education achievements and competence, she was confronted with limitations.

She slowly admits that under this circumstances, her former job is not possible, but she is searching for the solution, how to find a new start.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Are you familiar with some specific situations where you did face the war post traumatic situations?

### 3. Field Reports

Field reports are a documentation of analysis of a particular phenomenon based on theories and observations in fields of research in social sciences. All individuals in society, including counsellors or social workers, actively strive to make informed decisions based on their background knowledge. This knowledge is often present but goes unnoticed (Wolfinger 2002). Field reports combine theory and analysis, to build bridges of relevancy between the theoretical concepts and the practice of collecting data. Field reports are an important tool to help identifying challenges in implementing alternatives and new developments. The following chapter should help to understand how issues connected to differences in habitus and our theoretical concepts apply in the real world and in real situations.

Our project focused on the habitus in counselling for working people from underprivileged milieus and we utilized field reports as a key method for several reasons. Field reports refer to good or bad practice in guidance. They are documented authentic examples from counselling practice that describe concrete counselling activities and provide suggestions for interpreting the case and developing options for action. They are based on interviews with guidance practitioners on their experience and their everyday theories. This enables to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics between counsellors and guidance clients, as well as the broader socio-cultural factors influencing their habitus. First, we describe both the counsellors and the guidance clients involved, to be able to point out the problems with the difference in habitus.

Each description is accompanied by additional information (on country specific measures and modus operandi, examples of good practice, references to further literature or online sources for the content described) and questions for the reader's self-reflection.

#### 3.1. "This is going too far for me!"

Topic: communication

Issue: setting boundaries/drawing boundaries

Person Descriptions:

Leyla is working as a counsellor in a guidance project in Vienna in Austria, which is targeted at people with a request for training and/or further education only. Leyla has migration experience herself and speaks several languages including Turkish. This is communicated as an added service for guidance clients on the public website of the guidance organization. Any guidance clients who need counselling in Turkish thus contact her directly or are referred to her by colleagues. Experience has shown that it is easier/quicker to establish a relationship between the counsellor and the guidance client when counselling is provided in the guidance client's native language.

Elif as a guidance client also originates from Turkey, which is why she primarily wanted counselling in her native language. She would like to re-enter the labor market now that the children are in daycare.

Description of the situation:

Due to the shared and common language, difficulties arise in the personal closeness and distance relationship. In concrete terms, the focus in the following is on difficulties of Layla (counsellor) in

drawing boundaries to Elif (guidance client), who has the same mother tongue and belongs to the same ethnic group. The “common language” and the shared belief in a common origin quickly(er) creates closeness and trust in the first moment. The closeness created by the mother tongue is interpreted by counselling guidance clients as the fact that Leyla can help with any personal problems. Specifically, this refers to the description of a situation in which Leyla was also called by her counselling guidance client on weekends to help with general questions about life in Austria. Furthermore, she was contacted to help with finding a place to live. Leyla argues that she needs to create clear boundaries for herself. These are important to separate the private from the professional, both in terms of content and time.

In some areas of society, there is significant overrepresentation or underrepresentation of members of certain ethnic groups. This is due to mechanisms of class and milieu production, which can subsequently lead to social exclusion. The processes of exclusion of this social group, which is in the process of being formed in the counselling process, is justified by ethnicity. Through the counselling process, the feeling of belonging to a social group is created. This is justified by the shared ethnicity (see Wimmer 2008 and Wimmer 2013 for examples).

Against the background of “common language” and “culture”, Leyla is perceived as a contact person for matters that go far beyond the spectrum of Educational Guidance. Thus, the criteria of common language can be described as sensitive to habitus. In dealing with persons from underprivileged milieus, this can be considered an advantage, since, for example, the relationship-building phase happens quickly.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

How would you act in the situation described?

Would you stress and highlight qualities that can create closeness with your guidance clients in counselling?

### 3.2. “I dress differently in private and at work!”

Topic: guiding environment

Issue: dress code

Person Descriptions:

Mathias is working as a counsellor in a guidance project in Vienna (Austria), which is targeted at people with a request for training and/or further education only. He is very interested in fashion in a private environment. He can only follow this passion to a limited extent during his professional activities, as external appearance and clothing play a very important role in the professional context.

Jaqueline as a guidance client was born into a family affected by poverty. She says that she must borrow business clothes for job interviews from neighbors or friends. She only owns the bare necessities herself.

#### Description of the situation:

The different demands and habits of external appearance can be described as differences in habitus. Especially when dealing with people who have few resources for clothes due to financial reasons, guidance clients may feel intimidated by someone's appearing in branded clothing. This tends to create distance rather than closeness in the counselling context. Thus, clothing is relevant for the creation of closeness or distance.

Mathias is careful not to be perceived as inappropriate in the professional context. He therefore dresses rather simply. He pays attention to sufficient hygiene and cleanliness, but deliberately leaves expensive items at home. He owns expensive branded clothes, but at work he usually wears something plain so as not to stand out. Although he dresses simply, he still reaches for high-quality materials.

Jaqueline also pays particular attention to the appearance of people in her surroundings. As soon as she enters, she notices whether the counsellor wears expensive shoes or a brand watch or not. She immediately notices that the counsellor is wearing expensive clothes. Although no big logos or something similar are visible, she notices how much she stands out because of her worn-out garment. She would also like to dress nicely, but now the prices are too high for all the other essential expenses.

The difference in clothing choices could have created feelings of discomfort or inadequacy for Jaqueline. Seeing the counsellor wearing expensive items might have made her feel like she didn't fit in or couldn't relate to the counsellor's lifestyle. After all, Jaqueline feels judged and misunderstood based on her own appearance, which leads to barriers in communication and trust-building during the counselling.

Clothing is an essential aspect of habitus, as it reflects an individual's cultural, social, and personal identity. People often choose clothing that aligns with their upbringing, values, and societal norms, shaping their self-perception and how they are perceived by others.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

What clothes do you wear?

How expensive do you think your average outfits are? How expensive do you think the average outfits of your customers are?

### 3.3. "How is anyone supposed to know that?"

Topic: difficulties in knowledge about follow-up appointments

Issue: different attitudes

#### Person Descriptions:

Sarah is a counsellor from Lower Austria known for her punctuality and love for planning. She takes pride in her strict calendar and timetable, ensuring that she is always well-prepared and organized



for her counselling sessions. Her planning and time management skills allow Sarah to give her full attention to each guidance client, making sure that they have enough time to discuss their concerns and explore possible solutions. However, Sarah also understands the importance of flexibility and empathy in counselling. Despite her structured approach, she remains open to adjusting her schedule when urgent situations arise, putting her guidance clients' needs first.

Alex is a guidance client who struggles with punctuality and understanding the importance of timetables and schedules. Arriving late to counselling sessions is a common occurrence for Alex, causing disruptions and shortened session times.

#### Description of the situation:

Sarah and Alex had scheduled a counselling session for 3:00 pm at Sarah's office. Sarah, being the punctual person she is, arrived a few minutes early to prepare for the session. However, as the clock struck 3:00 pm, Alex had not yet arrived. As the minutes ticked by, Sarah got really concerned about Alex's lateness. She knew that counselling sessions were crucial for guidance client like Alex. Finally, at 3:15 pm, Alex entered the office, apologizing for being late. Sarah greeted him warmly but couldn't help but feel a bit frustrated as their session was now cut short by the late start.

During the session, Sarah gently brought up the issue of punctuality, expressing how important it is to respect each other's time. She explained that being on time allows them to have enough time to get into the topics about adult education that Alex wants to discuss. Alex seemed surprised by Sarah's emphasis on punctuality, as he had never really considered its impact on their counselling sessions before. He admitted that he struggles with managing his time and often loses track of it. Creating a safe space for open communication allows Alex to express any challenges or barriers that may be causing the lateness. Additionally, Sarah considered introducing practical techniques to improve time management skills, such as setting reminders, using a planner, or breaking down tasks into smaller, manageable steps.

Alex's lack of punctuality may stem from a different habitus and upbringing, where time management and adherence to schedules were not emphasized. This can lead to difficulty understanding the impact of being late on others and the effectiveness of the counselling process.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

How do you manage your emotions during sessions to keep a professional environment for your guidance clients?

How do you address sensitive topics such as punctuality?

### 3.4. "I am always getting prejudiced."

Topic: prejudice

Issue: being aware of stigmatization

Person Descriptions:



Maya is from Austria and has always been very individualistic and because of that she brings unique and creative approaches to her counselling. In addition to guidance, Maya focuses on fostering the guidance client's mental and emotional well-being. She promotes mindfulness and self-awareness, helping guidance clients build resilience and cope with stress effectively.

Maya herself has many piercings and tattoos. She buys most of her clothes at the flea market. She hates any kind of prejudice or stereotype. Her open-mindedness and acceptance create a safe and non-judgmental space where guidance clients can freely express their thoughts and feelings.

Susi as a guidance client is always conscious of being judged due to various reasons. She chooses an alternative lifestyle, and her appearance or beliefs differ from social norms, leading her to feel like an outsider.

#### Description of the situation:

Susi is feeling uncertain about her future educational and career choices and has sought help to gain clarity and to find the right way.

As Susi enters Maya's office, she feels a mix of nervousness and anticipation. Maya warmly welcomes Susi and creates a comforting atmosphere to ease her nerves. Maya's open and non-judgmental demeanor makes Susi feel comfortable enough to share her thoughts and concerns.

Maya begins the session by asking Susi about her interests, hobbies, and subjects she enjoyed in school. Susi shares her passion for art and creative expression, as well as her curiosity about exploring alternative career paths. Maya listens attentively to Susi's aspirations and encourages her to explore different educational opportunities that align with her interests. She presents various options, including art-related courses, design programs, and other creative fields.

In their guidance session, Maya's way of thinking and doing things (habitus) makes Susi feel like she belongs and is accepted. Maya is open to exploring different paths for Susi's education and respects her unique interests, which matches with Susi's own way of thinking (habitus). Maya's way of counselling, influenced by her own habits, helps Susi feel confident about considering creative careers that truly make her happy. Maya encourages Susi to be herself and trust in her own special path. In summary, habitus shapes the educational guidance session between Maya and Susi by influencing their perspectives, values, and ways of connecting.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Have you been open-minded and accepting of different educational and career paths?  
Have you been mindful of your own habitus and how it may influence your interactions with guidance clients?

### 3.5. "Just say what you mean!"

Topic: respect and politeness

Issue: different notions of language and its use as well as rules of behavior

#### Person Descriptions:

Birgit is a kind and caring counsellor from Austria; she always has a smile on her face. She helps to find solutions to problems concerning education and work while listening carefully. She always tries to understand how her opposite feels. She is very patient and very calm; she never rushes through anything.

Alex as a guidance client has a unique way of communicating and is not afraid to speak his mind. Despite his direct approach, he is always willing to lend a helping hand when needed. He is not afraid of taking on challenges and sees them as opportunities for growth and learning.

#### Description of the situation:

During their first meeting, Alex feels frustrated by Birgit's polite and reserved manner of speaking. He prefers direct and straightforward communication and interprets Birgit's politeness as hesitancy or lack of confidence. As the session progresses, Alex becomes increasingly impatient, and his habitus encourages him to express his opinions more aggressively. He interrupts Birgit multiple times by cutting her off mid-sentence.

The lack of alignment between Alex's assertive communication and Birgit's politeness becomes an issue during the session. Alex feels that Birgit is not taking him seriously, while Birgit worries that her approach is not effective in reaching Alex. They talk about the different ways they communicate and why it's essential to understand each other's styles. Birgit encourages Alex to express himself while also asking him to be patient and let her finish speaking.

As they continue their sessions, Alex realizes that Birgit's politeness doesn't mean she doesn't take him seriously. He starts to listen more and be more patient, allowing Birgit to talk. Birgit also adapts her communication a bit to be more direct when needed, making sure Alex feels respected and understood.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

How does your communication style influence the comfort level and openness of your guidance clients during our sessions?

How could you enhance your communication skills to better convey empathy, support, and guidance to your guidance clients?

How do you handle different expectations regarding politeness?

### 3.6. I didn't really get through to him!

Topic: expectations and trust to guidance

Issue: balancing between proximity and professional distance

#### Person Description:

Guidance practitioner Renate, 48 years old, is a long-standing guidance practitioner with a wealth of additional qualifications. She works in a transfer company in a big city in Germany. She is a

teacher by profession but has chosen to work in adult education. She has many years of experience as a course leader in literacy and has also qualified to run integration courses for refugees, where she worked for several years in the relevant courses to promote language. She has now been employed as a guidance practitioner in a transfer company for six years.

The guidance client, Luigi, is Italian and came to Germany with his parents when he was four years old. Today he is 59 years old, has a small flat in the Ruhr area, is single, but has children for whom he is liable to pay maintenance. He attended primary school only sporadically and worked on construction sites in Italy and Germany from the age of 14. From 1980 - 1994 he worked as a waste disposal worker and fork-lift truck driver. From 1994 to 2020 he was employed in a clinic as a kitchen assistant and cleaner. In 2020, the department was outsourced, and he was made redundant. At his last job, it became clear that he had little literacy skills. He could not manage the tasks of ordering materials.

Renate describes his character as quiet, reserved, polite, dutiful and reliable. He is open to social contacts and skilled in small talk. It is noticeable that he always wears black clothes and is hung with chains. His hobbies are watching videos, cycling, fish and aquariums. His main concerns are financial because he knows he has to work for at least seven more years.

#### Description of the situation:

In guidance, his expectation is that Renate will support him with his job applications so that he can hand in something in writing. In concrete terms this means: Renate is supposed to write his application papers for him. When the guidance practitioner follows up, it becomes clear that he is very surprised to learn that there is an upper and a lower case in German. Renate writes him the necessary application documents, which he also hands in to various companies. The guidance practitioner fails in finding out what became of each application because the person seeking advice obviously does not understand the application process. In response to R.'s queries, he replies that he no longer knows who he spoke to in each case. He throws away written responses from potential employers because he cannot read them. He still hopes that he will find a job through social contacts without having to show anything in writing. Renate tells him that he "smells bad" and that this can be a disadvantage in the job interview. He does not see it that way and her intervention is ineffective. The person seeking advice leaves the transfer company at his own request. Renate does not know what became of him.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Is the guidance practitioner's remark that the person seeking advice "smells strong" habitually insensitive or an appropriate hint?

How do you behave in comparable situations?

Are the guidance practitioner's writing of the application documents a habitus-sensitive approach or a patriarchal gesture that must ultimately lead potential employers to conclude that the applicant has writing and reading skills?

How would you deal with the situation? How would you try to get through to him?

### 3.7. Labour market policy framework and matching with habitus sensitive guidance?

Topic: Expectations and confidence in the success of guidance

Issue: Taking the guidance client's goal seriously

Person Description:

Guidance practitioner Marianne has many years of experience as a guidance practitioner in transfer companies. She lives in a city in Germany with around 100.000 inhabitants and works in a city not too far away. She is always happy when guidance clients think about qualification, because she is convinced that long-term integration into the labour market has a better chance with qualification. But her hands are often tied because placement in work is the primary goal.

Guidance client Josephine is divorced and has two children aged 16 and 19. She graduated from high school in 1994 and worked as a kitchen assistant while still at school. She decides to train as a cook, which she successfully completes. She says she "slipped into" the training, actually she hates cooking. She works as a cook in various restaurants, but often changes employers, sometimes after one month, sometimes after two years. After her four-year child-rearing period, during which she is temporarily registered as unemployed, she works as a cleaner for three years, and later takes over a company canteen, which is then gone into bankruptcy.

Description of the situation:

The guidance practitioner Marianne has a 50-year-old advice-seeker Josephine in the transfer company, who is aiming for a field of work that is still in its infancy. She wants to qualify as a care assistant with a focus on end-of-life care. The guidance practitioner perceives the guidance client as very determined from the beginning; she has already clearly formulated her wishes in the initial counselling and tells that she likes to work with older people and apologizes for her "interest in death and mourning".

The employment agency rejects Josephine's wish for qualification. At the time of her wish for change, employment agencies give priority to job placement over qualification, regardless of how precarious and lacking in prospects the jobs offered are. The result is widespread perforated unemployment, i.e., a permanent change from precarious employment to unemployment. In this specific case, the responsible employment agency could not identify a need for care assistants and considered a corresponding qualification to have no prospects. The establishment of a new federal government was associated with a paradigm shift in labour market policy. The previous priority of employment over qualification was abolished in favour of qualification. The transfer companies were asked to persuade their advice seekers to qualify quickly. "At the moment, almost everything we apply for in terms of qualification is granted." The employment agency had overlooked the fact that the occupational field of care assistants has changed a lot. In the past, this field mainly employed freelancers, but there were increasing signs of a shift to permanent positions. The guidance client is now granted the qualification and completes it during her time in the transfer company. She then has so many jobs offers that she can choose and obtain a permanent position.



### Additional information

Transfer companies become active in Germany in the case of insolvencies or partial insolvencies of larger companies and advise former employees on career prospects. Guidance clients can stay in the transfer company for up to one year and have an employee status. Is there something similar in your country?



### Questions for self-reflection:

Does the priority of placement in work over qualification represent a structural habitus insensitivity for you because the desire and need of those seeking advice does not guide action? Or is it rather the habitus of the guidance client Josephine (A-levels, energetic, goal-oriented) that makes qualification possible for her? Is habitus sensitivity in counselling dependent on certain labour market policy framework conditions? If so, which framework conditions are or would be important to you for this?

## 3.8. Between family tradition and departure

Topic: Prejudices

Issue: Addressing the conflict of conscience?

Person Description:

The guidance practitioner Selma, 45 years old, comes from a family with a migration background. She came to Germany herself at the age of six, attended school, studied social pedagogy and then decided to work as an educational counsellor after receiving further training. Guidance clients with migration and refugee experience often come to her counselling. She seems to enjoy their trust.

The guidance client Amira is 22 years old and single. She came to Germany with her conservative and very religious family in 2015. The family has a recognized asylum status and thus a work and residence permit. Amira learned German quickly and obtained her secondary school leaving certificate two years after her arrival. She is a quiet and rather introverted person. For the last four years she has worked as a shelf filler in a drugstore, where she is appreciated as a reliable worker and a friendly, helpful colleague.

Description of the situation:

The guidance client Amira wants to do vocational training. She has in mind an apprenticeship as a medical-technical assistant (MTA). When she presents her plans to her family, her father expresses strong reservations. Her father's opinion is important to the guidance client. Although male customers also shop in the drugstore, he has a certain distrust of German men and fears that they would "soil" his daughter's honor. Only after lengthy discussions does he agree to the training plans, but only on the condition that only women work in the doctor's office and that the patients his daughter encounters are exclusively female. The guidance client of course knows that

such a practice does not exist. She comes to counselling and asks the guidance practitioner for support in realizing her career aspirations. She makes it clear very early that she has great confidence in the guidance practitioner and very much hopes that the guidance practitioner will recognize her dilemma and encourage and help her.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

How would you respond as a guidance practitioner?

What kind of procedure would you suggest to the guidance client?

What information would you still need from the guidance client to be able to support her (better)?

Is it a habitually sensitive action when you as a counsellor support the guidance client's wish and actively help her to find a training place? Or is it rather to be classified as habitus-insensitive because you are driving the guidance client into a culture-related conflict with her father/family of origin? Or is it not a question of habitus at all, but an expression of the conflict between the culture of origin and the native culture?

### 3.9. "Language in the guidance process"

Topic: Use of language in the guidance process

Issue: Different levels of language use - mother tongue, professional language, everyday language, etc., depending on differences in habitus

Person Descriptions:

Counsellor Mojca, 40, has been working at the Employment Service for six years, advising migrants seeking employment in Slovenia (to be entitled to guidance, migrants must have the status of a person with international protection and be registered at the Employment Service). As a philosophy graduate, she had to acquire additional skills and experience to work as an employment counsellor.

A few years ago, she spent six months in Africa volunteering for a humanitarian organisation. Drawing on this experience, she feels that being aware of the differences in habitus between counsellor and guidance client is very important. She believes that these differences have several dimensions, ranging from differences in education and attitude towards learning, to differences in cultural and social backgrounds, etc. In her experience, awareness of these differences is present on both sides, the counsellor's and in the guidance client's.

Recently, more and more immigrants from Africa have been attending her counselling, mostly younger men with vocational training, primary education, or no education at all. Some are planning to stay in Slovenia and others are planning to move to Western European countries if they have relatives or acquaintances that live there. They struggle with learning the Slovenian language well enough to be able to communicate at work and in everyday life. They often communicate in English. In Slovenia, they find it easier to communicate in English with the younger and middle generation, but difficult with the older generation (who does not speak English or speaks it less well; either they have forgotten English, or they learnt German when they were younger).

#### Description of the situation:

Mojca works at the Employment Service as a counsellor for the integration of migrants into the labour market, mainly on the active employment policy measure, which enables migrants to work and train for 6 months at a workplace in a selected company. Her task is to speak to the interested migrant to find out which job he/she is suitable for and to inform him/her about the conditions, training courses etc. Migrants who have already completed a Slovenian language course for foreigners attend those counselling sessions. In her practice, however, she observes that after finishing this 120-hour course, African immigrants do not speak Slovenian well and have difficulties understanding her during guidance process. She recognizes two problems: poor knowledge and understanding of the Slovenian language in general; and poorer understanding of the content of the conversation if her language is too “professional”.

Work experience taught her to transform “professional” language into everyday language, to use simple words, short sentences and regularly check the guidance client’s understanding. She points out that checking the understanding is also necessary because of the differences in the cultural and social environment from which migrants come and Slovenian cultural and social environment, which is the counsellor’s environment. She often has to explain that the values and attitudes towards education and work in Slovenia are different from those in their primary environment. When presenting the active employment policy measure, a six-month on-the-job training in a selected company, she specifically presents the expectations of employers, management, co-workers, and others with whom the migrants will come into contact.

To support the presentation of the measure, she has created a glossary with the 100 most common words in Slovene, which is translated into different languages of migrants she meets in her work. Sometimes she refers her guidance clients to additional Slovenian language training offered by NGOs, as well as to other training courses offered free of charge if she finds that they lack skills for a particular job. Furthermore, she contacts the employers and visits them at their companies (out-reach approach), making them aware of the possible communication problems. She also suggests possible measures/solutions in the work environment (e.g., a co-worker to support the migrant in further learning and understanding of the Slovene language – the words and phrases he/she needs to use at work; additional, organised training that the company can include the migrant in, etc.).



#### Questions for self-reflection:

What is your experience of working with migrants and understanding the language used in the guidance process?

Are you careful to translate your “professional” language into everyday language to make it easier for guidance clients from underprivileged backgrounds to understand you?

### 3.10. “Am I aware of my dress style?”

Topic: Dress code and guidance environment

Issue: Being aware that the counsellor’s outfit and the furnishings of the counselling room are also a part of the counsellor’s habitus



### Person Descriptions:

Counsellor Zdenka, 60 years, works in guidance in adult education centre where adults from various underprivileged groups often visit. She provides advice on enrolment in education and continuation of education, as well as on career development. She has many years of experience in this field of work, is highly educated, and participates in continuous training for her work. She likes to dress smartly; in recognisable fashion labels or those of well-known designers from her environment, therefore her wardrobe is recognisable as well as expensive. This makes her more visible in her organisation, but also makes her feel neat and confident in her own clothes.

The premises in which she works have been recently renovated and have modern furnishings, giving them a “luxurious” yet bright and welcoming feel. The new furnishings have been chosen to make guidance clients who come for guidance feel comfortable and safe to talk to a counsellor in confidence.

### Description of the situation:

Guidance client Melita, 35 years, who is at risk of losing her job due to redundancies, is interested in the possibility of completing a vocational secondary education (having dropped out of vocational school at a young age), as this will give her a better chance of re-entering the workforce if she loses her job. As she has a low personal income, she dresses modestly, in noticeably cheaper clothes.

When the guidance client Melita meets the counsellor Zdenka who is dressed in fashionable labels, she is even more aware of her difficult situation and modest clothes. At the same time, she likes the bright, modern rooms, but her distress makes her feel more uncomfortable than comfortable. She is reserved in the guidance process, feeling that she does not belong in that space and that the very modern looking counsellor will not understand her.

The guidance counsellor, not knowing the reasons, senses the guidance client’s reserve. She thinks that perhaps the guidance client has lost hope that her situation will change even if she gets at least vocational education. At first, the counsellor does not recognise that the guidance client is puzzled by the counsellor’s tidy appearance as well as by the modern premises.

By following the recommended steps of the guidance process, the counsellor gradually uncovers all the obstacles that stand in the way of establishing a safe and confidential communication with the guidance client. Recognising that her modern look is also a barrier, she “softens” it to some extent for the next meeting with the guidance client by adjusting her outfit in a way that is closer to the guidance client but still makes the counsellor feel comfortable and neat in her clothes.



### Questions for self-reflection:

Do you pay attention to the way you dress depending on which groups of adults come to you for guidance (daily, on a case-by-case basis, when you do outreach activities)?

To what extent are you willing to adapt your dress style to potential guidance clients so that you feel comfortable, in line with how you like to be dressed, and so that your outfit is not a barrier to an open (safe and confidential) communication with the guidance client?

Is your office furnishing welcoming and homely? What do your guidance clients think about it?



### 3.11. “How we differ in our attitudes to learning?”

Topic: Attitude towards education and career

Issue: Understand/recognise the guidance client’s attitude towards learning and career

#### Person Descriptions:

Counsellor Andrej from Slovenia, 63 years, has been working in guidance for adults for several years. He has a positive attitude towards adult education and learning, considers knowledge to be a value. He comes from a large family with many children, some of whom have completed their education at primary and secondary school level, some at university level (including him) and some of whom have furthered their education in adulthood (one of his siblings up to PhD level). He is continuously improving his knowledge and is acknowledged as an excellent counsellor in the guidance in adult education network. However, in the counselling process, he encounters adults who have left education early and have not been improving their knowledge, and for whom knowledge is not a value. Therefore, over the years of working in guidance, the counsellor has learnt from experience how to gradually, step-by-step, motivate and encourage those adults to engage in education and recognise its benefits.

#### Description of the situation:

Guidance client Marko from Slovenia, 42 years, does not have a positive attitude towards education and does not value knowledge. He was one of the weaker pupils in primary school and continued his education at a vocational school. However, he had learning difficulties and perceived himself as less capable. He has been working in production behind a conveyor belt for number of years and has never received any further training or upskilling for his job. As the employer is going to modernise the production process with new machines, only those who take part in the employer-specified training will continue to have a job. However, the guidance client fears that he will not be successful and doubts why this would be of any benefit to him.

In the guidance process, the counsellor Andrej identifies the guidance client’s obstacles and fears. In guiding the conversation, the counsellor makes sure to encourage the adult to reflect on what he has learnt over the years at work and outside of work. Together with guidance client Marko they uncover his hidden knowledge, he self-reflects on its benefits and on his success in certain activities, e.g., that he has done a lot of work himself when building a small cottage and landscaping, that he is very handy and has learnt a lot on his own.

The counsellor helps him understand and accept that he can (and has) build on his knowledge in his own way (through helping him to become aware of the learning approach that is right for him – learning style, to improve concentration and organisation for example). The counsellor underlines this by his knowledge of the characteristics of adult learning and from examples from his own family. He explains that, as a counsellor, he will also be able to monitor and support him during his training. He helps him understand and realise the real benefits that will show at the end of the training, how he will be able to apply it to his work, but also in his personal life.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

What are of your guidance clients' attitudes and experiences towards education and learning (career development)?

Are there differences between different groups of guidance clients?

How do the differences between your attitudes and theirs, regarding education and learning (career development), affect the guidance process? How do you consider this in the guidance process?

### 3.12. "What is my counselling approach?"

Topic: Counselling approach as a dialogue between equal persons

Issue: Setting counselling as a dialogue between equal persons for habitus sensitive guidance process

Person Descriptions:

Counsellor Ana, 42, from Slovenia, has been working in adult education for the last 10 years and has a degree in andragogy. Previously, she worked as an adult education organiser and therefore has a good knowledge of formal and non-formal adult education. In the last five years, she has upgraded her knowledge and skills in career guidance. In her guidance work, she often encounters adults from vulnerable groups (with different barriers to accessing lifelong learning). She often detects differences in her own and her guidance client's habitus, which is sometimes reflected in the counselling approach as she observes.

Adults from vulnerable backgrounds often lack confidence in their abilities and capabilities, have low self-esteem, low education and skills, and do not value knowledge. They often have expectations that the counsellor in the guidance process will be able to solve everything for them or tell them how to solve the problem. This was also the case for Majda, a middle-aged woman who worked in the kitchen and was looking for a new job because of back problems.

Description of the situation:

Majda is middle-aged. She came to see Ana because she saw information about free career change advice in a local newspaper. She has primary education and works as a cook but has had problems with back pain for some time due to permanent standing at work and would like to change her job and work organisation. She came to Slovenia from Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 years ago, but still does not speak Slovenian well (she mixes Bosnian and Slovenian). However, she feels that this does not hinder her from communicating in a work and personal environment. When she came to see the counsellor, she told the counsellor directly at the first meeting that she expected the counsellor to find her a job, anything, if she did not have to stand (work on her feet) all day.

At the first meeting, the counsellor sensed that Majda thought she would tell her which job was suitable for her and would find it for her. She perceived an expectation that the counsellor knew what was best for her and that she had the power or influence to get her the job. The counsellor immediately recognised the approach the guidance client expected: I know nothing, you know everything, and you will solve my problem. To not disappoint the guidance client at the first

meeting, the counsellor promised to help her to begin with, rather than immediately pointing out that it was up to the guidance client to discover what she was interested in and, in line with her newly defined career goals, to approach the job search herself (following up advertisements, writing applications, attending interviews, etc.), perhaps even taking additional training.

Counsellor pays particular attention to the habitus of her guidance clients and the differences between her own and their habitus, and to setting realistic goals. She considers it very important to be empathic, to monitor the guidance client's non-verbal communication and to make sure that it is based on the guidance client's specific situation. She thinks it is very important to build a good relationship, so that the guidance clients open up more easily and then it is easier for them to solve the problem together. Well-developed soft and communication skills (see Cedefop, 2021) are a great help in that.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Which counselling approach do you use to cope the differences in habitus of counsellor and guidance client and to fulfil the guidance client's expectations?

Do you have defined steps - phases to follow when managing the guidance process?

Which competences for are the most important for you?

### 3.13. "This is one big black box to me!"

Topic: communication, language

Issue: setting boundaries/drawing boundaries

Person Descriptions:

The guidance practitioner Jan, from Czech Republic, is an expert with many years of experiences with work with adult people and the way how to support them on their professional and carrier growth. In view of the current situation in Ukraine and the ongoing war conflict, he also provides counselling to new arrivals from Ukraine and helps them to integrate into society and the labour market. He is middle aged, so he learned Russian at school and has a very good command of the basic's communication.

Oxana is a guidance client seeking advice. She is Ukrainian woman who came to the Czech Republic alone (without family) in her 25 in autumn 2022. She is living at her friends in a small flat in Pilsen – West part of Bohemia. She is single and she has no children. She attended a school of art back at home. She would like to continue with art, but she is also realistic, and she wants to learn language first to be able to obtain any regular job to earn money to be independent. She can speak English, but she has no knowledge of Czech language.

Description of the situation:

During the meeting Jan finds out details about the situation to support Oxana (also) in her personal situation and about her official status in the Czech Republic. It means Jan supported her in the process of obtaining temporary protection process.

During this first phase the communication was held in a mixture of languages, partly Russian, partly in English and a lot non-verbally or via already existing brochures and kind of e-vocabularies.

After this mixture discussion the basic orientation of guidance client was set and Oxana had a clear picture of existing system in the Czech Republic and possible support within it. She decided to submit the request for requalification to the Labour Office – which means that you have the interest to become job applicant as well – she started attending the language courses.



#### **Additional information**

The Czech Republic is the third most frequent destination of Ukrainians fleeing the country among EU Member States and the country with the highest number of Ukrainian refugees per 100 000 inhabitants. A total of 44 per cent of the refugees are women of working age, 35 per cent are children, four per cent are seniors and the remaining 17 per cent are men of working age. Three quarters of the adults were under 45 years of age. Almost one in three adults is under 30 years of age. Currently, there are 325.742 persons with temporary protection in the Czech Republic.



#### **Questions for self-reflection:**

How would you address the person who is not able to speak in your language and other languages are not fully working either?

How would you behave in a comparable situation, whom would you contact or which tools would you use to support the process of counselling?

Would you stress and highlight qualities that can create closeness with your guidance clients in counselling?

### **3.14. “It is still not me!”**

Topic: transfer situation

Issue: balancing between past and future

Person Descriptions:

The guidance practitioner Olga, 52 years old from Czech Republic, is a long-time performing guidance practitioner. Her professional service is provided in the capital city Prague, and in the last couple of years she works in a transfer centrum, supporting persons with criminal record back to the active life. To this position she was driven by several experiences, mainly since she always took

her job as a mission to search for a complex solution for her guidance clients. It was never only about employment.

The guidance client Martina is living in the capital city. She is 41 years old. She graduated at the University of Economics, and she started to work within the smaller hotel at the central Prague and she gradually became a top manager of the hotel. She was very successful at her work life, and she had good income conditions. She could afford also support her husband financially. However, the marriage proved to be very troubled and resulted in a complicated divorce. Martina's husband did refuse to accept the divorce and put many obstacles in her way. Martina also lost her contract to run the hotel because of those challenges. It was at this time that she learned she suffered from a hereditary heart defect. She couldn't cope mentally and started taking drugs. She started her journey to prison by damaging the hotel she had run for several years.

#### Description of the situation:

The guidance practitioner Olga is working with Martina. Martina is returning to the "normal" life after 4 years in prison. Martina was oriented by her friend to contact transfer centrum where Olga is working to help her to find herself again and to restart.

The guidance practitioner perceives the guidance client as personality, which is very clear in her wishes and ideas, but as hurt, kind of blocked and without stable financial backing personality. In her own words: "After four years, I came out as a retarded person. You must get used to a lot of things again, to learn," After the first meetings, it was also clear that Martina is very intelligent and motivated to start her career again.

The best solution discussed in between guidance practitioner and her guidance client was to start step by step with work to find the best rhythm for the guidance client. As the transfer centrum had good co-operation with several companies, it was decided to try admiration on half time contract, to catch up again and deadline obligations. Martina was very successful in this position and her prerequisites for precision stood out. After half a year Martina was promoted from operations assistant to assistant in charge of the administration of individual projects. To pay her debts, she found a second job. All the time she was supported by the guidance practitioner who did try to find the best combination of jobs and incomes to solve debt situation of Martina.

Now Martina is able to pay her bills and debts, however she still needs support. She is not feeling in good balance, she is too fast, rushing all the time, she has also diet problems and is still feeling she is missing the "old Martina", who was more efficient, full of energy and optimism.

To fulfil the wish of Martina "to pay back" to transfer centrum for the support and trust, she started to be active within the community centrum with which the transfer centrum is co-operating and she organizationally supports art performances, where she is also personally active.

She hopes she will find herself one day.



#### Additional information

In the Czech Republic there is a number of NGOs supporting specific marginalized groups to overcome their situation. There are also NGOs helping people with criminal record to get and to keep job and housing.



### Questions for self-reflection:

How would you behave in comparable situation, whom would you contact or which tools would you use to support the process of counselling?

Which counselling approach do you use to cope the differences in habitus of counsellor and guidance client and to fulfil the guidance client's expectations?

Do you have defined steps - phases to follow when managing the guidance process?

## 3.15. "Money plays a role!"

Topic: insolvency situation

Issue: to find positive point to be attractive even within overall negative situation

Person Descriptions:

The guidance practitioner Lenka is 36 years old and works in Czech Republic guidance for adults for several years. She always enjoyed helping people and she always likes to see the outcome of her engagement. She did study at the pedagogical university and formally she started to work with children. Step by step she found out, she would like to broaden her skills and knowledge to also understand parameters and conditions of the "adult" world, comprising facing and solving different life challenges. This brings her to the adult education environment and gradually to the support and counselling of adult persons. However, she still feels the knowledge of childhood situation and problems as a big advantage as many "adult problems" were created in childhood. This is a point she likes to use in her work, and she is building up on this experience.

Guidance client Vladimír is a young man, 43 years, with bad life experience in the sense of money. He is trained as an electrician. After the apprenticeship he started to work and after few years he decided to become self-employed. He did take several loans to start his business, but after a certain period he was not as financially successful as he supposed to be. He was not able to pay the loans back, bank took part of his property which he guaranteed for the loan and work equipment, so he was suddenly without possibility to perform his job. On top of this still some amount of money was not covered, and he should find the solution for ensuring his income to be able to pay back the money.

Description of the situation:

The guidance practitioner Lenka met Vladimír in his life period which could be called disaster. He had limited accommodation possibilities, debts and limited work performance, mostly delivered within the shadow economy. It was nearly not realistic to him to find kind of regular job as there was no employer to employ Vladimír, due to the administrative obstacles connected with obligatory payments deducted from his salary.

First, Lenka tried to build friendly environment that Vladimír is not ashamed to talk about his total business failure connected with social and financial instability. Which was one of the crucial points for Vladimír. She used friendly and equal communication trying to support Vladimír with his explanations and help him to name all troubles as well to stress his quality.

She investigated about the debts, and she suggested the plan how to handle it. One and basic precondition how to manage the situation was to find stable work for Vladimír and to show him, that there is a way of his situation. The most difficult moment was to match this specific situation with stable employer. One of Lenka's experience was that stability is usually provided by kind of state sector, and she did focus on this segment with the combination with the professional skill of the guidance client. Based on personal knowledge and contacts she did manage to find care house for elderly people seeking for maintenance worker – with accommodation.



#### **Additional information**

Employee insolvency a significant burden on employers. In addition to making deductions from wages, they are, for example, obliged to monitor the order in which enforcement orders are received and face heavy fines for any misconduct. When an employee has multiple garnishments, the employer must communicate with all the garnishees who are conducting the garnishment proceedings. A system set up like this completely discourages the employment of people in insolvency/debt.



#### **Questions for self-reflection:**

How would you behave in comparable situation, whom would you contact or which tools would you use to support the process of counselling?

Are you using personal contact when trying to find solution for your guidance client? If yes in which situations?

How is the financial insolvency or debts situations solved in your country? Do you have such an experience?



## 4. Guidelines

In Chapters 2 and 3 we have addressed habitus-sensitive guidance using examples of case studies and field reports. In this chapter we will now deal more conceptually with the question of where and how habitus sensitivity is required in guidance practice with more disadvantaged guidance clients and how it can be practiced. We have chosen two approaches for this:

On the one hand, central results and findings from interviews we conducted with counsellors in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, which allow a closer look at the different groups of disadvantaged people the ReachOut project is confronted with. This also enables a more precise determination of the respective habitus of the target groups, i.e., their preferences, characteristics, and assessments. Despite the diversity of the labour markets and social structure in the participating project countries, the target groups have a high degree of commonality across countries. Therefore, there is no need for country-specific approaches to habitus sensitivity.

On the other hand, we also use findings from empirically based literature on habitus-sensitive counselling.

When we speak of guidelines, this means the following: We want to...

- formulate pointed statements on habitus sensitive guidance in the guidance process
- point out particular challenges and coping strategies
- give practical advice
- point out boundaries and obstacles.

These topics are presented in four modules.

### 4.1. Principles for habitus-sensitive guidance

Recognizing the significance of habitus-sensitive guidance is crucial as it highlights the need to move beyond a “one-size-fits-all approach”. Adapting counselling strategies to align with individuals’ cultural nuances and social frameworks ensures that advice and support are not only relevant but also resonate authentically with the diverse identities and contexts of those seeking guidance. In doing so, habitus-sensitive counselling becomes a central tool in promoting inclusivity and understanding within the counselling process.

We have developed some guiding principles based on our interviews. Guiding principles are convictions and orientations for the concretization of one’s own professional actions and for the review of one’s own everyday actions. The following principles form the basis of the recommendations for, and boundaries of habitus-sensitive guidance formulated in the modules that follow.

#### **Empathy and Active Listening:**

Counsellors play a crucial role in fostering a supportive environment by embodying empathy and active listening. It is imperative to maintain a non-judgmental stance during interactions, ensuring that individuals feel heard and understood. By actively listening without interruptions and displaying genuine concern for their feelings, counsellors create a space where individuals can freely express themselves. This empathetic approach forms the foundation for effective educational guidance.

#### **Cultural Sensitivity/Diversity:**



In the diverse landscape of educational guidance, cultural sensitivity is paramount for counsellors. Developing cultural competence involves actively learning about various backgrounds and respecting the uniqueness of each individual. By approaching interactions with a profound respect for diversity and displaying kindness universally, counsellors contribute to an inclusive support system that values and appreciates differences.

#### **Boundaries:**

Establishing and maintaining clear boundaries is essential in the role of a counsellor. Transparency in communicating the extent of assistance that can be provided and adhering to professional rules ensures a healthy guidance relationship. Striking a balance between offering support and avoiding excessive involvement in personal matters is crucial for maintaining professionalism and preserving the individual's autonomy.

#### **Empowerment and motivation:**

Empowering individuals in their educational ways is a key objective for counsellors. This involves facilitating informed decision-making by providing relevant information and encouraging individuals to set and pursue their own goals. Respecting the autonomy of guidance clients and letting them take the lead fosters a sense of self-efficacy, enabling them to navigate challenges and find solutions based on their strengths. Avoid paternalism. Build the counselling process on the motives of the guidance client, considering their interests and needs.

#### **Non-Discrimination:**

Promoting a culture of non-discrimination is fundamental in educational advising. Counsellors must be vigilant about their own biases and prejudices, ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and equally. By maintaining objectivity and preventing personal opinions or feelings from influencing their assistance, counsellors contribute to an unbiased and equitable support system.

#### **Peer Support:**

Recognizing the challenges inherent in educational guidance, the importance of peer support cannot be overstated. Counsellors should actively engage with colleagues, seeking networks within the profession. Regular supervision and consultation with trusted peers provide a platform for counsellors to share experiences, seek advice, and enhance their professional development. This collaborative approach ensures a continuous improvement in the quality of guidance provided.

#### **Networking:**

For habitus sensitive guidance, it is important that counsellor accepts the fact that one cannot be deeply in expertise in all subjects. To overcome this situation a form of professional networks or/and development of professional contacts seems to be a very good solution. Within those networks or contacts, counsellors can share experiences and they co-operate in direct support of the guidance client.

## **4.2. Modul 1 Designing assess to the target groups**

### **4.2.1. Who are the target groups?**

The importance of habitus sensitivity in guidance becomes vividly clear when you look at the groups in life, educational and career counselling. Anyone who can concentrate on one group in guidance, for example the long-term unemployed, acquires a certain degree of habitus sensitivity based on their experience with this target group alone. As the duration of unemployment increases, the

impression of becoming socially irrelevant becomes entrenched in those affected, dependence on state transfer payments increases and the feeling of being lived rather than living grows. As the effects of long-term unemployment on those affected are similar, they develop specific ways of living, thinking and behaving that make it easier for guidance practitioners to understand and deal with their habitual imprints.

As an example, we have tried to identify the groups that have required a great deal of counselling in Northrhine-Westfalia in recent decades. It became clear that the differences in the ways of thinking and behaviour of the various target groups are significantly greater than their similarities. Understanding their respective habitus and working with it requires specific guidance practitioner skills for each group, which not only demand a high degree of self-reflection from the guidance practitioners, but also require constant further training to understand the respective thought and reaction patterns.

#### **4.2.2. Access to the target group – from information and promotion to outreach**

It is important that organisations have a defined approach to reaching the selected target groups, from information, promotion (promotional campaign) to outreach activities. In the case of the ReachOut target group, we particularly stress the importance of outreach, as described in Chapter 1, 2 and 3.

Both information, promotion and outreach work are based on a thorough knowledge of the characteristics and needs of the selected target groups. This aspect has been given special attention in the ReachOut project, as we have presented these characteristics for each of the four participating countries in the National Reports, as well as some common ones at EU level.

When planning and implementing information and promotion, counsellors can work with experts from other organizations and, in cooperation with them, organize outreach activities (e.g., guidance at the workplace in the company, information and counselling in non-governmental organizations that work with selected target groups, participation in local events, inclusion of "peers" in counselling, etc.).

Information and promotion should take place in various ways, with printed materials (leaflets and attractive infographics) and live presentations (with the involvement of counsellors), using different media, from local newspapers, television, and radio to social networks. Information should be presented through short, concrete, and comprehensible messages (using simple language), explaining the benefits of counselling and education for the selected target group, as well as where, when, and how counselling is available.

The counsellors interviewed in the ReachOut project suggest that should be included concrete successful stories of guidance clients who have been involved in guidance and are ready to share their story with others (short video clips or short written statements with a photo) in the information and promotion.

#### **4.2.3. Structure of habitus sensitive guidance process**

Structuring the guidance process in stages can significantly contribute to its' quality and efficiency. The counsellor's awareness of the content of each phase leads to results that answer the guidance clients' problems with which and/or for which they came to the counsellor. As described in individual field reports in Chapter 3, it is important that the counsellor uses suitable methods. In the following, the key phases are described, whereby the counsellor's flexibility to adapt the course of each phase to the guidance client's needs, his active role in this process and the goals he wants to achieve is important.

#### 4.2.4. First interview

We have already pointed out that many people in the ReachOut target group do not come to guidance voluntarily and often have few expectations of helpful counselling. This is why the first contact is of particular importance. If it is possible to establish a basis of trust between the guidance practitioner and the guidance client during the first meeting, it is more likely that the guidance will be successful in the long term.

Therefore, it is important to take enough time in the first meeting to clarify the expectations, hopes and motives of the guidance clients and to make it clear to them what guidance can do, but also what it cannot do. The more the guidance practitioner knows about the guidance client's expectations, the more goal-oriented counselling can be structured.

It is important to make it credibly clear to the guidance client that his or her cooperation in guidance is voluntary and that he or she does not have to expect any sanctions if he or she refuses to cooperate. The offer of guidance is a support and not an obligatory service. It is helpful to make sure in the first meeting that the conversation is not disturbed by incoming telephone calls or third persons. The architecture of the guidance setting is also important. Hierarchical imbalance could be signaled, if the guidance practitioners sits behind his desk and the guidance client in front of it.

#### 4.2.5. From the coming to the going structure

The experience: Many people who are in life situations in which educational counselling can be helpful and purposeful do not come to guidance. "They either don't know that there are free guidance services in our institution, or they are afraid to come to the center," said one guidance practitioner. There can be many reasons for not seeking guidance, from fear of failure and reservations to not feeling addressed by guidance services or not seeing or putting aside one's own needs. In the ReachOut project, many different milieu-specific and individual barriers to access and reasons for abstinence were mentioned in the interviews. Even if there is no such thing as low-threshold access to counselling: Bridges to the target group are needed to reach them.

One bridge could be to take up guidance concerns where the target groups are anchored in their lives, such as church communities, day-care centers, schools, sports clubs. The guidance scene has so far only marginally developed approaches to outreach guidance work that is set up on a permanent basis; most of them are project-based and thus set up for a limited period.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

To what extent do these statements meet with your approval?

When you think about habitus-sensitive guidance, what is also important in your experience when you want to achieve access to the target group?

#### 4.2.6. Consider setting for guidance and form

Counsellors may face challenges in creating the right setting and form for guidance, especially when working with working people from underprivileged milieus. The environment, structure and format of counselling can greatly impact its effectiveness. Our research suggests that the setting and format of guidance can significantly influence the comfort and engagement of working people from underprivileged milieus. Counsellors should strive to create a welcoming, safe, and comfortable setting for

guidance. The form of counselling should be flexible, adaptable, and adapted to the unique needs and preferences. If necessary, some sessions should also be available online or at least by telephone. This allows people who are not mobile to continue working on their goals.

The challenge lies in recognizing the individual needs and preferences of each person, adapting the setting and form accordingly, and being attentive to any discomfort or barriers that may arise during counselling.



#### Questions for self-reflection:

Are you adapting the form of counselling to meet the needs of every individual?

How important is this aspect for you?

Guidance practitioners have had good experiences with the following:

**Create a Welcoming Space:** You could ensure that the counselling environment is warm, inviting, and comfortable. Especially working people from underprivileged milieu should feel safe and respected in the setting.

**Flexibility and Adaptability:** Be open to adjusting the counselling approach to meet the changing needs and preferences of each person. Avoid rigid structures that may hinder progress.

**Individualized Approach:** Recognize that every person is unique. Tailor the form of counselling to align with the specific circumstances and goals of everyone.

### 4.3. Modul 2: Challenges for habitus-sensitive guidance in the guidance process

Guidance for the target group of people of the underprivileged milieu is very demanding and requires a lot of patience, empathy, self-knowledge, an appreciative attitude and a strong basis of trust. It also requires a lot of initiative and work from the guidance practitioners. What does this mean in practice?

#### 4.3.1. Use simple, understandable language and visualizations where appropriate.

As early as the 1950s, the American linguist Basil Bernstein analyzed the different language codes of the various social classes and made it clear how incompatible the restricted language code of the lower class is with the elaborated language code of the middle class. Being aware of this is a core competence of counsellors.

To put this into practice, it can be helpful to use simple and understandable language adapted to the target group in order to communicate with each other on the same level, which also reduces access barriers). Simple, understandable language can also have a positive effect on the dynamics of the conversation. In addition, non-verbal communication in the form of facial expressions and gestures is particularly effective within the target group to “communicate more broadly”. Especially when those seeking advice do not speak national language, non-verbal communication can be used to build trust.

In addition, visualizations and pictures are helpful, such as recording one's own life history with its transitions, to show the counselling seekers in an encouraging way what they have achieved in life so far.

#### **4.3.2. Effects of external appearance**

The guidance practitioners do not fully agree on the importance of the choice of clothes. Some stress the importance of adapting not only the language but also the style of dress to the target group, e.g., dressing more casually instead of wearing a suit, as this could be off-putting. Others make it clear that the dress issue should not be overstressed. Guidance clients from underprivileged backgrounds are aware that a guidance practitioner can dress "better" than "oneself".



#### **Questions for self-reflection:**

What is your experience about external appearance working with guidance clients from underprivileged milieus?

#### **4.3.3. Dealing with different ideas about the meaning of education**

The guidance practitioners emphasize that it takes a lot of convincing to make clear that education can be the basis for the further life of the target group, as they usually associate rather negative experiences with education. It takes sensitivity and the tolerance to accept that the different educational backgrounds of guidance practitioners and guidance clients lead to different attitudes, expectations and hopes for education. "I must keep reminding myself that it is not about my education, but about the education of the person seeking advice. It is about their individual possibilities and goals... just because I myself think that a certain further education could be useful now, my guidance client doesn't have to see it that way too." Habitus sensitivity here means being able to recognize and correctly interpret the guidance client's meanings and wishes.

#### **4.3.4. Enabling trust**

When dealing with target groups that have a different habitus than the guidance practitioner, it is important not to be afraid of contact and to approach the guidance situation with openness and impartiality.

Several guidance practitioners emphasize how important it is to clearly distinguish their guidance from the guidance of the employment office, especially for guidance clients who are sent to them by the employment office. This external enforcement of guidance reinforces the already existing trust problem of the guidance clients towards the guidance practitioners.

It is important to mention that there is a certain risk of "emotional contagion" when working together on a very personal level, and guidance practitioners need to constantly reflect on this. The relationship between closeness and distance must be balanced to ensure professional cooperation.

#### **4.3.5. Biographical orientation**

Overall, it is considered helpful to include the entire biography in guidance, as looking back on one's life so far can increase self-efficacy. However, in addition to highlighting positive aspects, it is also important to give a realistic assessment of the qualifications and competences acquired in the



course of one's life as well as the resulting potentials. This can sometimes be met with resistance when guidance clients realize that the goals, they have set for themselves, e.g. training or further education, are linked to certain access requirements that they do not meet, or that certain qualifications or further education program take a lot of time.

#### **4.3.6. Setting goals in small steps**

When setting goals together, it is particularly important for the target group that these goals are set in small steps to avoid overwhelming them or causing them to drop out. Also, because the expectations of this target group are different compared to target groups from privileged milieus, it is important to have the patience to proceed in slow and small steps in the counselling process, especially where initiative and activity on the part of the guidance client must be demanded. In this way, excessive demands can be avoided.

The main goals of the guidance process are self-responsibility and activation to increase the guidance client's self-awareness of individual life goals. "It is about empowering the guidance client so that they are able to take action," is how one guidance practitioner sums it up. The approach is to move the target group from passivity to activity and to build confidence. This is imperative because the target group has problems taking responsibility for themselves. To achieve all this, guidance practitioners must have the ability to self-reflect and tolerate the guidance clients' actions, which may sometimes not be appropriate or welcoming.

#### **4.3.7. Dealing with prejudice**

Sometimes, counsellors can have unconscious preconceived ideas or judgments about people, and this can make counselling difficult. When working with working people from underprivileged milieus, these prejudices can be a challenge. Interviews and research show that prejudices can harm the trust and understanding in counselling relationships.

Prejudices can be difficult to recognize. There is now a lot of awareness that people should not be discriminated because of ethnicity or gender – class and habitus have so far usually received almost no recognition. For this reason, it is important to reflect on one's own origins and on the origins of guidance clients. Ongoing reflection and discussion with colleagues make it possible to recognize any prejudices that you may have unknowingly.

The challenge is recognizing when you might have prejudices, which can be hard because sometimes they are not obvious to you. It's important to be self-aware and willing to change.



#### **Questions for self-reflection:**

Are you aware of making assumptions about persons based on their background?

Did you reflect about your assumptions about persons and what they are based on?

#### **4.3.8. Dealing with guidance clients' emotions**

When guidance clients with difficult personal situations (e.g., low personal income, problems with their employer, insecure employment, disability, mental health problems, etc.) are involved in the guidance process, many of the (negative) emotions are often expressed by the guidance client – fear, anxiety, sadness, frustration, despair, etc. It is therefore important that the guidance practitioner



can establish a professional distance from these strong emotions that may arise in the guidance client and to professionally guide the counselling process in order to help the guidance client to gain a realistic insight into his/her situation and to identify the goals and activities that will lead the guidance client to solutions.

It is important that the guidance practitioner is emphatic (able to empathize with the guidance client's situation) and sympathetic (understands the situation and the guidance client's perception of his/her own situation), but also professional, guiding the counselling process in a step-by-step manner, actively listening, asking clear questions, encouraging reflection, summarizing findings, etc.

When guidance practitioners are often confronted with difficult guidance client situations in their work, there is a greater risk of the guidance practitioner being "emotionally overwhelmed" by these situations, and it is therefore recommended to use supervision as an approach to help "de-burden" the counsellor and prevent burnout.

#### 4.4. Modul 3: Conclusion and follow-up in habitus sensitive counselling

##### 4.4.1. Working with the phase model of mobile educational guidance

Guidance in this module refers on the one hand to the conclusion of a guidance session and on the other hand to the end of the entire guidance process. The phase model of mobile educational counselling provides important information for both phases. The third-last phase is the integration phase, in which the counselling results are classified, and attention is paid to securing the results. This is also where common goals are set, agreements are made, and support is offered. The subsequent final phase, or reorientation phase, includes mutual feedback, a review of success and the use of evaluation tools. The phase model concludes with an outlook and a farewell (Kühnapfel 2016, 760).

The phase model is suitable both for the conclusion of a counselling session and for the end of the entire counselling process.

##### 4.4.2. Conclusion and follow-up in habitus sensitive guidance

The integration phase is of particular importance insofar as setting goals and making agreements can, on the one hand, achieve a higher degree of commitment in guidance and, on the other hand, the fulfilment of the goals and adherence to the agreements can be checked and, if necessary, corrected in the follow-up sessions. During guidance, *"the decision to accept the advice is always left with the person seeking guidance... - which also generally increases the freedom of cancellation - but the formal commitment is also reinforced by the exclusive setting"* (Dewe, Winterling, 2016, 62) Target agreements and feedback are such elements of exclusivity in guidance.



##### Questions for self-reflection:

What do you think is important at the end of a guidance session and at the end of a guidance process when you are dealing with a guidance client from a vulnerable and/or underprivileged background?

#### 4.4.3. Importance of evaluations of guidance processes

At the end of a guidance process, guidance practitioners have a comprehensible interest and often also the instruction to learn something about the effects of their guidance services. Proven positive effects are intended to demonstrate the professionalism of the guidance practitioner and prove their usefulness to the guidance client or donor. Finally, they ensure a certain level of professional satisfaction or even professional pride.

However, once a counselling process has been completed, it is hardly possible to assume any correlation of effects. *"Guidance practitioners have to deal with the paradoxical situation that everything must be done to enable individuals to make good decisions for themselves. However, they then make these decisions independently and alone, which also means that they do not necessarily refer to the guidance themselves in the context of impact assessments."* (Gieseke, Stimm, 2016, 504)

Effectiveness and efficiency appear to be useful yardsticks for assessing the results of a consultation. This makes the objection formulated by Gieseke more serious: *"Everything should be utilized in terms of the desired efficiency. The latter also applies to all social services and all educational services. It is the rapid adaptation without consideration or weighing and learning is only intended to a limited extent. It is about following in the new, more modern sense, ultimately obeying in a modern way."* (Gieseke 2016, 40) For her, a guidance process is successfully completed when it allows those seeking advice *"an emancipative openness"* (ibid.). Otherwise, guidance *"tends to instrumentalize people. Professional counselling in particular cannot make common cause with this."* (ibid.)

#### 4.4.4. Guidance practitioner: Self-reflection and discussing with team

Experienced guidance practitioners point out that there are two approaches to be important for a guidance practitioner to learn from his/her own practice:

Self-reflection of one's own work: e.g., analysis of how the guidance process went; did I follow the recommended steps of the counselling process, did I fully explore the guidance client's habitus and was aware of the differences in the guidance client's habitus and my own, in order to ensure that it did not interfere with the impartial and professional handling of counselling?

Discussion in a team of guidance practitioners working in the same organisation or in another organisation with the same approaches and target groups (for greater comparability reliability): the guidance practitioner can reflect on his/her own work in dialog with other guidance practitioners who use similar approaches and work with same target groups. To exchange experiences and opinions on the process and results of handling the guidance process that is habitus sensitive, the guidance practitioner can present a concrete case of his/her own for which he/she would like to get the opinion of his/her peers. The team discussion can be guided by pre-defined questions prepared by the guidance practitioner presenting his/her case; the questions should be based on the guidance practitioner's reflections on parts of the guidance process that he/she would like to get the opinion of his/her peers. E.g., do you think I have adequately considered and acknowledged the differences in habitus between the guidance client and me? How would you react to the guidance client's lack of motivation for the proposed trainings that have proved necessary for him/her?

It is recommended that after each of the approaches described, the guidance practitioner should make a short note of the findings (which can be put in his/her portfolio<sup>9</sup> if he/she has one, or in a folder with notes on his/her work during the year if he/she keeps one). What could he/she improve or

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<sup>9</sup> A portfolio is a collective folder of one's achievements (education and learning - formal, nonformal, informal, career, life experience, etc.), it can also be a folder to store plans for upgrading the professionalism of one's work, career development, further training, etc. (Gladek et al., 2022).

do differently in the future, perhaps read more in the literature (or listen to a “podcast” on a particular topic or a “webinar” that has already been recorded and made available) or attend some additional training (in person or through online tools) to be successful and effective in planning and conducting habitus-sensitive guidance.

## 4.5. Modul 4: Critical reflections

### 4.5.1. Sensitivity in counselling - more complex than one might think

There is a broad consensus on the understanding of what habitus is. This may also be since the concept of habitus is clearly defined in the opening chapter. In contrast, there is no description of what might be meant by sensitivity. In common parlance, sensitivity – like empathy – has positive connotations throughout and is seemingly self-explanatory. The fact that the term is more complex and ambiguous shimmers through in some of the documented personas and counselling cases, for example in the question of the extent to which questions about clothing that correspond to guidance client expectations are an expression of habitus sensitivity. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to take a closer look at the understanding of sensitivity.

The German philosopher Svenja Flaßpöhler, in her publication “*Sensibel. Über moderne Empfindlichkeit und die Grenzen des Zumutbaren*”, published in 2021, has raised some aspects that are relevant in the ReachOut context because she makes it clear that an exclusively positive connotation of the term does not do justice to its complexity.

*“Sensitive” means: sensitive, tangible, receptive. Positively, the term is usually used in the sense of a pronounced capacity for empathy; negatively, it denotes the hypersensitivity of a subject who is not up to life. (ibid 16<sup>10</sup>) The author traces how this tension has shaped the history of philosophy since the Middle Ages. For her, sensibility is a “double-edged phenomenon... sensibility is outward and inward. Binding and separating. Liberating and oppressing. In a nutshell, sensitivity carries a violent side, which is already evident in its historical genesis. Indeed, the formation of sensibility presupposes coercion.” (ibid 18<sup>11</sup>)*

She refers to Elias’ work “*On the Process of Civilization*” (1939), which traces how the transformation of human behavior through progressive disciplining “becomes increasingly refined and makes man visibly more sensitive to his own as well as to others’ transgressions of boundaries.” (ibid 23<sup>12</sup>) Social progress depends on individuals “who are able to perceive their own and others’ concerns sensitively. Yet we are currently experiencing how precisely this constructive power of sensitivity threatens to turn into destructiveness: instead of uniting us, sensitivity divides us. It splinters society into groups, even becomes a weapon, on both sides of the front line.” (ibid 23<sup>13</sup>)

We have already referred elsewhere (Chapter 1) to the transformation of Western societies from externally led to internally led described by Sennett. As a result, “it is no longer universally valid forms of interaction, but feelings... are increasingly guiding actions.” (Sennet 2004, 24<sup>14</sup>) Individually different forms of sensitivity dominate over binding social norms and guidelines. Forms of hypersensitivity

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<sup>10</sup> Autors translation

<sup>11</sup> Autors translation

<sup>12</sup> Autors translation

<sup>13</sup> Autors translation

<sup>14</sup> Autors translation

develo *"Hypersensitivity means that one suffers more and more, although one has less and less reason to do so."* (Marquard 2021, 28<sup>15</sup>)

Floßpöhler points out another aspect that is particularly relevant in habitus sensitive counselling with disadvantaged guidance clients. *"Withdrawal instead of confrontation, sensitivity instead of harshness, understanding instead of demarcation: what could be objected to such empathic sympathy? A closer look, however, reveals the danger of a real loss of perspective: the attentive and empathetic observer required here [Guidance practitioners] no longer has any view of things of his own, because he is absorbed in that of the other person"*. (ibid 160<sup>16</sup>) This is why we think it is important to remember in the ReachOut context that *"sensitivity is not synonymous with progressiveness. Rather, sensitivity can backfire into regressivity if it is absolutized and glorified"* (ibid 209<sup>17</sup>).

#### **4.5.2. Time in habitus-sensitive guidance**

In many guidance and further education institutions, too, concepts of personnel and organisational development enriched with business management have been implemented across the board in recent years, which in some cases have massive consequences for guidance services. In many companies, the idea has been established that original pedagogical activities can also be recorded in business management terms and that target agreements can be concluded with the pedagogical staff. The prerequisite for this is a differentiated recording of all activities and requirements, each of which is defined as a product. This seems to provide the prerequisites for standardisation and thus comparability. As a result, time quotas are set for guidance, for example, and the frequency of guidance sessions that should not be exceeded. This assumes that the needs and requirements of those seeking guidance would also be comparable and thus standardisable. This assumption could be counterproductive for guidance, so the counsellor has to be aware of this.

#### **4.5.3. Balance flexibility, long term impact**

Many counsellors find it challenging to strike the right balance between structure and flexibility when working with underprivileged individuals. Achieving long-term impact in counselling for underprivileged individuals can be difficult, as quick fixes and immediate solutions are often prioritized.

Research and interviews show that flexible counselling approaches can better address the evolving challenges of underprivileged persons. Rigid approaches can sometimes result in frustration and a lack of engagement. Quick fixes may provide short-term relief but do not address root causes.

Counsellors should focus on balancing structure with flexibility in their counselling approach. This means creating a plan but being ready to adjust it as needed to meet the unique circumstances of each guidance client. Counsellors should prioritize long-term solutions and empower guidance clients to develop lasting skills and strategies for managing challenges over time.

#### **4.5.4. Stereotypes and the importance of intersectionality**

A challenge in guidance for working people from underprivileged milieus appears in biases, rigidity, lack of cultural competence, short-term focus, and missing attention of intersectionality when working with working people from underprivileged milieus.

Stereotypes can erode trust and rapport between the counsellor and the guidance client. When guidance clients perceive that their counsellor holds stereotypical beliefs about their

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<sup>15</sup> Autors translation

<sup>16</sup> Autors translation

<sup>17</sup> Autors translation



background, they may feel misunderstood, judged, or even objectified. This breakdown in trust can hinder open communication and the development of a strong therapeutic alliance. The challenge here is that often stereotypes are not recognizable as such and can only be reflected with great effort.

Cultural misunderstandings can significantly hinder the counselling process for underprivileged guidance clients. When counsellors and guidance clients come from different cultural backgrounds, there is a risk of misinterpretation and miscommunication. This can lead to confusion, frustration, and a breakdown in trust.

Another significant challenge in counselling of working people from underprivileged milieu is missing attention to intersectionality. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals often have multiple, interrelated aspects of their identity, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and more. These intersecting identities can create complex and unique challenges that are often overlooked when a counsellor focuses on just one aspect.

#### **4.5.5. Unintended paternalism in the guidance process**

When a guidance practitioner comes across a guidance client (in the guidance process) who is very self-conscious and/or low educated and/or in a difficult social situation (e.g., low-income, in precarious employment, at risk of job loss) and expects the guidance practitioner to find a solution for him/her, the counsellor may find him/herself (“gets trapped”) in a paternalistic role. That is in the role of, “I, who knows (everything), will tell you what to do”. It is therefore important for the guidance practitioner to be aware of this “paternalism trap” and to follow the professional recommendations for conducting an open guidance process in a step-by-step manner. That is from establishing a good rapport with the guidance client, building mutual trust and a safe environment, getting to know the guidance client’s needs, characteristics, circumstances, or habitus as a whole, to guiding the guidance client in defining the problem and in identifying concrete actions that the guidance client will take to resolve his/her problem. A coaching approach and the use of (counselling) tools to support the guidance practitioner and the guidance client in this process are recommended.

#### **4.5.6. Counsellor’s dilemma. Who is the prior customer?**

In the context of ReachOut project it can be useful to think also about the challenge which is created towards the guidance practitioner as concerns the “customer”.

Guidance practitioner interventions should correspond to customers change, it is important to follow aims thoughts and feelings of the two parties in the same guidance process. Elementary is how the guidance client and the guidance practitioner perceive each other’s thoughts and how they perceive themselves, their intentions, self-talk, self-directedness, and internal experiences (Melton, Nofzinger-Collins, Wynne, & Susman, 2005). However, counselling in the workplace is more challenging insofar as we are dealing with three participants, namely the counsellor, the person seeking advice - the employee – and the client – the employer.

During the guidance process and mutual interaction with the guidance client (employee), however, it may be realised that the guidance client would need a different or differently conceived method and focus of counselling by the guidance practitioner. It may happen, especially in individual counselling, that the guidance practitioner discovers a serious impediment on the part of the employee that prevents him or her from performing the job effectively. It can be e.g., relationship and partnership problems and, problems in family (divorce, or post-divorce trauma), financial problems, health complications etc. In this case, those elementary situations should be solved to comfort employee and to move her/him in a professional career.

There may also be situations, especially in group guiding case, where the guidance practitioner concludes that the agreed aim and approach of the counselling is not suitable for the group and would need to be refocused (for example, due to the personal situation or adjustment of the programme). To deal with these situations, it is advisable to negotiate intensively with the employer's representative and to have contractual space created in the agreement. Preliminary mapping of the employer's situation prior to the commencement of counselling and appropriate adjustment of the agreement and the focus of the work according to the established facts is also advantageous.

#### **4.5.7. Competence requirements for guidance practitioners**

As all our society, guidance counsellors are facing the reality of changing world, especially world of work and skills and competencies which are required or will be required. Educational and career guidance as such is rapidly emerging as a strongly felt need in these contexts. The basic start point is the quality of counsellor training and the formulation of counsellor competencies and standards to effective delivery of guidance services. Developments and innovations in guidance services are enabled and strengthened through high quality of counsellor education and training. Career guidance contexts are becoming more and more complex, facing number of challenges from different spheres not only those strictly connected with (changing) labour market but also with the legal environment, support in the financial situation and/or living and health support and guidance. Guidance is becoming more complex discipline; thus, the counsellor's competencies are broader and covering broad spectrum of life.

To find out till which extensions the knowledge of the counsellor who is providing support and guidance to the guidance client is sufficient and beneficial to the guidance client is very sensitive and important. In chapter 1 some classifications of competences which are formulated in general are presented and in chapter 4 the reader can find more concrete suggestions which competences the counsellors need in habitus sensitive guidance for working people from underprivileged milieu.

The counsellors involved in interviews in the ReachOut project particularly highlighted:

- Knowledge on: target groups, education system, labour market, changes in society, definition of habitus sensitive guidance;
- Skills for: active listening and flexible use of good communication skills, skills for reaching out the target groups from underprivileged milieu;
- Attitudes to: lifelong learning as a value, openness to cultural, educational and other socio-demographic differences, culture of non-discrimination, flexibility in time and structure of guidance process.

**Our final recommendation: be open to reach out all those who have not yet been reached.**



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