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on career guidance and youth skill development:
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Career Counseling and CV Development: Emphasis on Youth Skills and Professional Orientation

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how professional guidance and personalized CV development can enhance young people's employability. Through the examination of public and private training bodies, as well as European Union frameworks and Greek institutional structures, analyze key tools such as SWOT analysis, the role of formal and non-formal education, and vocational training. Particular emphasis is placed on the skill mismatch in the labor market and the initiatives undertaken by the European Commission and Greek authorities. These findings indicate that a combination of skills development, targeted counseling, and policy alignment is necessary for addressing youth unemployment.

KEYWORDS: Career counseling, youth skills, CV development, lifelong learning, vocational education, SWOT analysis

1 INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment and underemployment remain persistent challenges across Europe. In Greece, youth unemployment was 28.5% in 2021 (Eurostat, 2022), signaling critical gaps in education-to-employment transitions. Employment is a central factor in social integration, and access to it determines economic participation and well-being. Career guidance systems, when effectively implemented, have the potential to bridge these gaps by helping young people develop competencies, assess their personal and professional interests, and engage with labor market

opportunities (OECD, 2021). Public services such as DYPA (formerly OAED) offer career services, seminars on CV writing, and access to job listings. Institutions like Cedefop provide strategic insights into skill development needs.

2 POLICY FRAMEWORK CAREER ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

Career counseling has evolved into a policy instrument for economic and social inclusion. The European Commission's "Youth Guarantee" and the "European Skills Agenda" (2020) advocate for structured guidance from early education through adulthood (European Commission, 2020). National strategies have increasingly aligned with European initiatives to reinforce the availability and quality of lifelong guidance services (Cedefop, 2014).

In Greece, professional orientation in education started formally in the late 1970s and evolved through the establishment of structures like KESYP and GRASYP. Although initially integrated into secondary education, policy reforms led to its marginalization. Today, EU programs promote its reintegration, recognizing the importance of early intervention in career development. Activities include personalized guidance, career fairs, and collaborative events with employers.

3 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

The importance of both soft and hard skills in securing and maintaining employment has become increasingly evident in global and European labor policy. Soft skills, such as communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, are now considered as crucial as technical competencies (World Economic Forum, 2020). Hard skills, especially those related to digital technologies, data analysis, and foreign languages, remain core to industry-specific qualifications (ILO, 2020).

According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2023), employers across the EU report difficulty in finding candidates with the right mix of these skills. In Greece, despite relatively high levels of tertiary education attainment, job candidates frequently lack transversal skills and practical experience (Cedefop, 2022). Addressing this gap requires integrating skills development into early education, technical training, and adult learning programs.

Soft skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and teamwork are increasingly prioritized by employers (Cedefop, 2023). Simultaneously, hard skills including IT literacy, foreign languages, and technical certifications remain essential for sectoral specialization. Greece lags behind in aligning its educational output with employer demands, necessitating stronger links between curricula and vocational realities (Cedefop, 2022). The European Union highlights the importance of the 4 Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Programs now emphasize these skills as essential components for personal and professional growth in a digitalized world.

4 SWOT ANALYSIS IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

One of the most widely applied tools in vocational counseling is the SWOT analysis, evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It serves as a reflective framework that encourages individuals to identify internal competencies and external conditions that may influence their professional trajectories. Within the Greek educational context, SWOT analysis has been introduced in career workshops and counseling programs, especially those aligned with EU-funded projects aiming at enhancing employability (Kokkos, 2005). Its application provides a foundation for targeted skill development and goal setting, especially among youth navigating uncertain economic landscapes.

In Greece, many workshops facilitated by public career services such as DYPA or academic career offices have incorporated SWOT in helping young people define their value proposition in the labor market. It also encourages a proactive approach to building personal narratives in CVs and job interviews (Savickas, 2013).

5 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTIONS

In Greece public and private institutions provide training aligned with labor market demands. These programs support both unemployed youth and adults seeking to change careers. Collaborative efforts improve accessibility, skill certification, and practical outcomes. A key factor in the development of employability is the interplay between public institutions like DYPA and private training providers such as PwC, Manpower, and Adecco. These actors provide structured training, mentorship, and certification aligned with labor market needs (Bitzenis et al., 2015). DYPA, for instance, supports not only unemployed youth but also career changers, offering access to e-learning platforms, job fairs, and EU mobility networks such as EURES. Meanwhile, private agencies act as mediators, upskilling candidates and matching them with market opportunities. Collaborative synergies are essential to build responsive and integrated employment pathways (European Commission, 1996).

Effective career development relies on the synergetic involvement of public institutions, private training providers, and employer networks. In Greece, the Public Employment Service DYPA (formerly OAED) offers individual counseling sessions, career planning workshops, and upskilling programs targeted at youth and long-term unemployed adults. These services are increasingly coordinated with EU frameworks like EURES and the European Social Fund (ESF), which aim to promote mobility, equity, and competitiveness (European Commission, 2020).

DYPA (formerly OAED), in collaboration with KEK and private consultancies, provides reskilling programs, CV writing workshops, and counseling services. These are reinforced through EU funding, particularly under the ESF+(European Commission, 2021). Private actors such as multinational consultancies (PwC, Manpower, and Deloitte) add value by tailoring training modules to sector-specific trends and providing career transition support (Bitzenis, Makedos & Kontakos, 2015). Their role is particularly crucial in sectors experiencing rapid technological transformation, where state systems often lag in responsiveness (OECD, 2021). Collaboration between these stakeholders enhances employability by linking training outputs with employer needs.

6 RESEARCH DATA AND POLICY IMPLICATION

According to Cedefop, ELSTAT, and other sources, there is a persistent mismatch between educational qualifications and job market requirements. This is particularly evident among young people. Policies focusing on lifelong learning, skill updating, and labor market integration are crucial for addressing this issue. Recent data from ELSTAT and Cedefop (2022) indicate a persistent mismatch between academic qualifications and labor market needs. In Greece, over 30% of young people are either unemployed or underemployed despite tertiary education attainment (ELSTAT, 2022). The mismatch is attributed to structural deficiencies in aligning curricula with industry demands and limited exposure to applied work experience during education. Initiatives like the European Skills Agenda (2020) and national ESF programs target these gaps through modular training, micro-credentials, and lifelong learning incentives.

Data from Eurostat (2022) show that Greece remains one of the countries with the highest youth unemployment rates in the EU. Despite an improvement since the height of the economic crisis, the structural nature of the problem, characterized by skills mismatches, limited work-based learning, and inadequate career guidance, persists (ELSTAT, 2021).

In response, the European Commission's Youth Guarantee initiative, supported through ESF+, aims to ensure that all young people under 30 receive an offer of employment, education, apprenticeship, or training within four months of becoming unemployed (European Commission, 2020). Evaluations of the program underline the need for better outreach, stronger personalization, and greater integration with education systems (ILO, 2022). National responses must address systemic gaps in data-driven planning, guidance professionalization, and evaluation mechanisms.

One of the most pressing issues in youth employability in Greece is the evident mismatch between the qualifications of job seekers and the demands of the labor market. According to data analyzed by Cedefop and Eurostat, Greece significantly lags behind other Eurozone countries in the share of jobs requiring high-level skills. In 2020, only 32.39% of jobs in Greece were in high-skill occupations compared to 44.65% in the Eurozone average. Between 2011 and 2020, the growth in such employment was marginal, rising from 29.66% to 31.78%, while the Eurozone grew from 39.61% to 43.26%.

Such trends underscore the necessity for policy interventions that enhance vocational training, promote practical learning experiences, and support transitions from education to employment.

Table 1. Share of High-Skill Employment (Greece vs Eurozone)

Year	Greece (%)	Eurozone (%)
2011	29.66	39.61
2020	31.78	43.26
2021	32.39	44.65

Source: Cedefop and Eurostat Labour Force Surveys Microdata.

Despite positive policy intentions, gaps remain in personalization, data tracking, and resource allocation. According to ELSTAT (2021), over 35% of young people in Greece are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEETs). This highlights the urgency of reinforcing guidance systems and institutionalizing career services within all levels of education. Data from Eurostat show that in 2021, only 32.39% of Greek jobs were high-skill, compared to 44.65% in the Eurozone (Eurostat, 2022). This structural disparity limits upward mobility and employment quality.

7 CONCLUSION

Career guidance and skill development are foundational components of an inclusive and responsive labor strategy. Structured interventions from both the education system and labor market actors, combined with personal initiative and institutional support, form the basis for a more resilient and employable youth population.

For Greece, aligning national efforts with EU frameworks and investing in comprehensive, data-driven guidance systems are crucial steps toward addressing youth unemployment and enabling long-term economic resilience. Empowering youth requires more than isolated interventions; it demands a holistic, ecosystem-based approach engaging schools, employers, policymakers, and learners themselves.

This paper has demonstrated that career counseling and the development of competitive CVs are instrumental in bridging the skills gap facing European youth. Early intervention through school-based orientation, comprehensive skill assessment using SWOT, and cross-sectoral collaboration between education and employment bodies emerge as central strategies. Policymakers must ensure the integration of dynamic, data-driven approaches into national guidance systems, with the support of EU frameworks. Ultimately, building resilient and skilled generations requires an ecosystem that fosters adaptability, awareness, and access.

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