

5 European regions: Baden-Württemberg (Germany), Basque Country (Spain), Brittany (France), Jämtland (Sweden), and Steiermark (Austria)



## Bridge+



Keyword(s):

*Career Guidance; Local and Regional Development, Digital Education and Training*

### Introduction

BRIDGE+ is an EU funded project under Erasmus+ KA3 that gathers representatives from the ALE sector and public authorities in 5 European regions in Spain, Germany, Sweden, France and Austria. The participating regions have a certain degree of competence in education and training. The participating regions also served as role models for the national level and have the power to influence policies.

### Main challenge

Bridge+ was built upon the results of the previous Bridge project (also EU funded under Erasmus+).

Context and challenges identified when the application was written, in 2018: Changes in society, technology and economy are accelerating in speed. The assumption in the economy, especially by the global players and in the academic world, is that one half of the know-how becomes obsolete within five years. At the same time the current know-how doubles. The gap between acquired competences and sought-after competences is increasing. As a result, there is a high demand for more flexible and higher level competences and skills of individuals. A survey, conducted by the polling institute forsa, indicates the currently most asked competencies by the employers. They are: ability to cope with change, digital social competence, abstraction and analytic competences, self-organisation and learning to learn-competence. Although the companies are looking for professionals with these competences, career guidance counsellors often aren't able to deal with them, since



instruments to support the development of these new skills are still based on old principles:

- Companies or other employers use simple, one dimensional techniques to identify training needs of employees or skills demands of specific workplaces – if they analyse such demands at all.
- Career guidance and counselling is based on standard procedures or tests and non-individualised information is provided to those looking for new opportunities. Most counsellors – public as well as personnel developers in companies – focus on formal competencies and leave informal and non-formal competencies aside.
- Education “educates” the labour force instead of “developing” it.
- Communication, cooperation and coordination between different actors rarely take place.

Cedefop states in a briefing note (20.03.2014) that one out of three employers has problems in filling vacancies as the candidates have wrong skills. According to Cedefop, employers claim that education systems educate graduates of tomorrow in the skills needed in the industry of yesterday.

In country studies reported in the literature, between 10 per cent and one-third of the employed are found to be overeducated and around 20 per cent are undereducated, which results in a total mismatch of between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of the employed in European countries (International Labour Office, September 2014 “Skills mismatch in Europe

### **Timing**

Apart from what is explained in the previous section, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world right when the project was running and it impacted its development. The COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis accelerated the demand for more flexible and highly skilled individuals and brought new challenges to the education sector and the labour market, as well as made evident the urgent need for a green and digital transition. Regional policies need to react to these changes and provide high quality solutions in the field of education, training and career guidance. Innovative policy approaches are needed to help bridge the gap and contribute to a more dynamic and sustainable European education, training and labour market.

### **Objective**

The BRIDGE+ project established concepts of regional skills development and guidance supported by digital infrastructures.

The main goal of the project was to tackle skills mismatches between demands of the world of work and competences of employees or candidates. With the help of ICT tools, relevant skills and competences were made visible in the two directions of

companies and individuals and were accessible for career guidance officers. Respective activities were developed on regional level and like this in close cooperation with the relevant actors.

Existing regional career guidance networks gave better access to innovative technology such as competence balancing software, skills management systems for companies, Europass features etc. In pilot initiatives, these tools were linked by technical interfaces on regional digital platforms.

In trainings, users not only learned when and how to use the IT tools, e.g. to make formal, non-formal and informal competences of individuals visible. They were also motivated to use the tools as “BRIDGES” to the partners, allowing a constant dialogue on future work and learning – the most important pillar of labour market skills intelligence.

### **Target group**

- Career guidance institutions, networks and counsellors
- Companies from different branches and their staff, especially management staff in smaller companies and persons from the human resources department in bigger companies. Small and medium-sized companies will be especially targeted, the education and training sector and persons, working in this field
- Individuals planning future learning pathways and careers
- Multipliers like business associations and chambers, trade unions, welfare organisations, churches etc.
- Policy makers

### **Geographical range**

These initiatives were implemented in the framework of existing multi-actor career guidance and education networks of the 5 European regions: Baden-Württemberg/Germany, Basque Country/Spain, Jämtland/Sweden, Brittany/France and Steiermark/Austria.

### **Stakeholders and partners**

The project was built on the work of regional career guidance networks that partly already comprised different kinds of partners -not only career guidance organisations but also the education sector and employment. These partnerships between education and employment were strengthened and a constant dialogue on future work and learning was fostered with the help of ICT technology. The project involved relevant regional actors, above all career guidance institutions, but also employers and their Chambers/associations, education and training institutions, the political level and individuals.

### **Strategy / materials**

## 1. Traditional dissemination activities

The following activities were developed:

- Distribution of articles about the activities to different networks via EARLALL network and other networks
- Presentation of information and activities to the European Institutions (via official letters, participation in events and/or face to face meetings where possible)
- Promotion of the project among EARLALL members, invitation to get involved as observers and to pilot the outcomes
- Presence at key events: European Education, Training and Youth forums, Vocational Skills Weeks, meetings of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, partners' conference and events – Lifelong Learning task force, European Parliament Interest Group on Lifelong Learning and public hearings, etc.)

## 2. Online dissemination

The following outputs were developed:

- Presentation of information at EARLALL and partners' websites and participating organisations
- Presentation of information in e-newsletters to be disseminated with regular frequency
- Distribution of information via email to different networks – using EARLALL network but also other European networks (such as the Lifelong Learning Platform, EAEA, EfVET, FREREF, etc.)
- Integration into social media: using existing popular social media channels, we can both create an online presence and interact with our target groups
- Integration of results in the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform

EARLALL developed a project identity that consisted of:

- A project logo, including shapes, colours, etc.
- A PPT template

Concerning printed material, a project leaflet with a logo was prepared and distributed during events. The leaflet explained the project aims and expected results, the partners involved and their contact details. Final publications were made available online.

Concerning online dissemination, a website was developed

(<https://bridgeplusproject.com/>) and a video

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cApBQH6EpI&ab\\_channel=EARLALL](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cApBQH6EpI&ab_channel=EARLALL)

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## **Resources**

BRIDGE+ is an Erasmus+ project and therefore was financed by the European Commission.

## **Innovation(s)**

The BRIDGE+ project responded to the predicted radical changes in the world of work due to digitalisation processes. It also responded to changes in the world of education, training and guidance which – on the one hand – is influenced by digitalisation, too, and – on the other hand – needs to support individuals in developing learning paths and careers in a more personalised and self-responsible way than in the past.

The BRIDGE+ concepts, tools and digital platforms became crucial hubs in new learning scenarios. Accordingly, the innovative potential of BRIDGE+ was significantly high.

Moreover, the following elements of the project reflected its innovative potential:

- The BRIDGE+ project included innovative technologies for career guidance and bundled them via technical interfaces in a new context. The fact, that existing tools were combined with each other and used in new combinations was a promising novel approach.
- The new ways of skills development were tested in regional contexts – and, therefore, were realistic and close to individuals, companies, learning and guiding institutions. To link different regional approaches with each other and allow mutual learning between the partners is certainly also a novel concept.
- BRIDGE+ was also innovative and ambitious, as it put activities on a wide basis by following a multi-actor approach and acting on different levels (offline and online, grassroot level and European level etc.). Thus, it solved the problem that innovative technology for career guidance were often used as island solutions – and therefore didn't reveal its full potential.
- The selected innovative tools for career guidance allowed to put a bigger focus on generic and soft skills which were expected to become more important in the future world of work.

Last not least, innovation approaches of guidance were used: firstly, skills-based guidance strategies allowing the individual to reflect own strengthes and weaknesses and comparing them with requirements of future work – and, as a consequence, individualised strategies of guidance.

## **Website/Social Media profile(s) of the initiative**

<https://bridgeplusproject.com>

## **Contact details**

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