



ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

ΚυπροΕλλαδικό Συνέδριο
Συμβουλευτικής και Επαγγελματικής Αγωγής
2021

**Επαγγελματική Συμβουλευτική και
Προσανατολισμός στη μετά-covid19 Εποχή**

**Career Counselling and Guidance
in the Post-COVID-19 Era**

19 - 20 / 01 / 2021



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Edited by: Nikos Drosos

Covid 19 and young people with disabilities: Challenges and opportunities for the future

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Introduction

There is no doubt that Covid-19 has changed the lifestyle of the entire world. People had to learn to live with new norms and regulations in all daily life sectors, starting from the need to adopt the recommendations of washing and sanitation routines and adhere to social distancing practices. This new lifestyle was very challenging for most people, above all for those who experience vulnerabilities such as people with disabilities.

Many concerns and questions about the impact of Covid-19 on this population were raised since its beginning. Three main life ambits will be addressed below for their potential impact on career counseling and guidance, namely health, employment, and education.

Health Challenges

The health issue has been the most worrying aspect since the beginning of the pandemic for the entire world. As concerns specifically people with disabilities, data from international literature show that they are at higher risks for contracting the virus and for negative post-Covid-19 consequences than other people (Turk et al., 2020). If we consider that about 16% of students have developmental disabilities (Zablotsky et al., 2019), the seriousness of the situation also for young people which vulnerability increased during the pandemic, emerges in all its drama.

The risk to contract the disease has been accompanied, on one side, by the need of protecting people with disabilities from becoming ill and, on the other, by a debate raised on the treatment they deserve if infected (Mello, Persad, & White, 2020).

As professionals who work for increasing clients' wellbeing, career counselors should consider that people with disabilities need assistance in daily routines, such as toilette and food routines. Consequently, these people are more exposed to be in contact with family members or care professionals who may be carriers of the virus. Moreover, people with disabilities could find it difficult to understand and perform in the right moment or context some preventive activities, such as wearing the mask or washing their hands. These difficulties reduce the probability of observing social distancing or preventive norms and expose them to a higher risk of becoming ill. Consequently, in the working contexts, more attention should be devoted to teaching and learning new routines and health prevention in general. Besides,

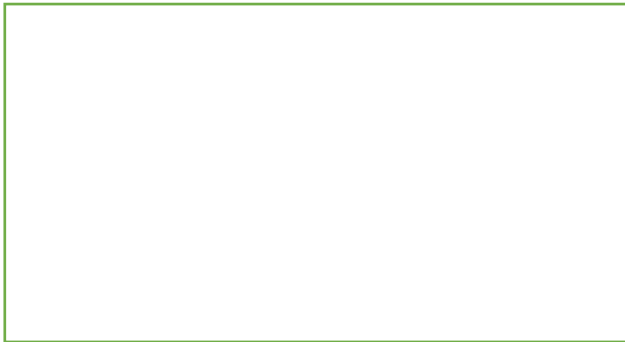
In this regard, a higher collaboration between career counselors and HR is highly desired. The research activities were recently conducted in Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Nederland, and Serbia by the partner teams that are involved in the Erasmus+ project "Connect!" (2019-2022; <https://connect-erasmus.eu/>) confirmed the relevance of this collaboration in the ambit of small and medium enterprises. The cross-national analyses clearly show the two groups of professionals value positively working together as a multidisciplinary team for the benefit of both the workers and the organizations. These results will be taken into account for developing an innovative training program that has in its roots equality and social justice issues as well as the UN Sustainability Developmental Goals, and that will be directed both to higher education students and professionals.

Universal Design for Learning and equality. An opportunity for increasing a positive change toward a more sustainable and equal policy, procedures, and programs also in the field of employment came from Sheppard-Jones and collaborators (2020). They, in fact, enlarge the potential benefit of adopting the Universal Design for Learning (see CAST, 2018) to support workforce development, especially when vulnerabilities are present. More specifically, they refer to UDL as a framework that can guide career and employment professionals and stakeholders to accommodate the widest array of employees and improve the quality of life and well-being for all. In their tripartite lines of action, they include a *structural* line, that refers to improvement of health and security in the new jobs that are performed in new settings, a *social* line, that refers to promotion positive attitudes toward diversity, increasing participation of all and proposal of inclusive education to colleagues and employers, and finally, a *cultural* line, that refers to include UDL in training program and curricula to prepare future professionals.

The high level of flexibility and the careful attention to pluralism right away that characterize UDL, go with several equal and social justice benefits among which there are listed: (1) a decreased need for accommodations because workplaces are thought to be inclusive at the outset; (2) a reduction of the stigma of disability because by its nature UDL aims to give voice to several groups and individuals, not only with disability and at the same time these lasts are equally considered as workers without disabilities; (3) the promotion of an inclusive workplace because the high level of participation at several organizational levels is pursued; and (4) extensive gains for the employer that receives a return of investment in terms of organizational, social and economic profit.

Infusing equality and social justice in career counseling is more and more requiring a lot of attention to guarantee women, people of color and low educated higher opportunities.

CVs of Invited Speakers



Dr. Lea Ferrari, Associate Professor in Psychology, University of Padova

Presentation Title: Covid 19 & young people with disabilities: Challenges and opportunities for the future

Short Bio: Dr. Lea Ferrari is an associate professor in psychology at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology, University of Padova, Italy. Her research efforts are devoted to the study of variables and processes involved in career construction models to promote work and social participation, quality of life and work satisfaction. Attention is devoted to contextual factors with a preventive focus and to mindset and positive outcomes. Activities include setting up of instruments, planning and efficacy verification of intervention programs. She teaches Diversity management in the workplace and Psychology of inclusion for people with disability.

Together with Scott Solberg (Boston University) she is coordinating the International Research Network on Social and Emotional Competences and Career Development that aims to study similarities and differences across culture and foster SEL skills in educators to make their children ready for the world of work. She is involved in two European projects: CONNECT! that aims to link career counselling with HR practices, and psSMILE that aims to promote social emotional competences in primary schools. She serves as editor of the Turkish Journal of Education TURJE for the counselling and guidance field and of the newsletter of the IAAP Counseling Division 16.

She also serves as ad hoc reviewer of many international journals. She is also member of the Board of the University Network for Innovation in Guidance Foundation from 2017.