



Strategies to **Utilise** and **Cultivate** positive  
Characteristics & **Employability Skills** in **Schools**

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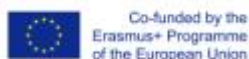
## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

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### Report



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## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

### Content

1. THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF EMPLOYABILITY AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH TO CAREER COUNSELLING .....	4
1.1. Brief review of employability development theoretical issues .....	4
1.2. Positive psychology (counselling) methods for career guidance and employability training .....	7
2. PROJECT PARTNER COUNTRIES LITERATURE REVIEW ANALYSIS ON CAREER COUNSELLORS AND CAREER GUIDANCE IN THEIR COUNTRIES .....	10
3. RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF CAREER/SCHOOL COUNSELORS NEEDS .....	14
3.1. Focus Groups (FG) results of career counsellor's need's .....	14
3.2. Results of quantitative study of counsellor's needs .....	18
Conclusions.....	26
Literature.....	27

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

### **Introduction**

The “SUCCESS-Strategies to Utilize and Cultivate positive Characteristics & Employability Skills in Schools” ([www.eusuccess.eu](http://www.eusuccess.eu)) project aims to apply the principles, methods, and techniques of Positive Psychology (PP) as well as the development of basic Employability Skills (ES). By educating schools counselors (SUCCESS target group) through training in participating EU countries, they will be in a position to transfer new knowledge and skills to school settings at a national and an EU level

The goal of SUCCESS is to create an innovative training package for School Counselors (including a manual, accompanied by hands-on activities, tools, and practical exercises) based on PP principles that will be applied successfully mainly to support students after they graduate from high schools. SUCCESS aims to enhance School Counselors competencies.

The goal of the first stage (Exploring and Revising Current Needs and Conditions of School Counselors) of SUCCESS Project is to explore the school counselor’s personal and professional needs of each participating partner country. For this purpose, the literature review, national review of national career and educational guidance policies with a special focus on School Counselors’ training, functions, competencies, and roles in providing guidance services within the secondary education system was conducted. Also, the results of qualitative and quantitative studies of the school counsellors' needs were analyzed.

The outcomes of first intellectual output are presented in three parts of report: 1) theoretical context of employability and positive psychology approach to career counselling; 2) project partner countries comparative review analysis on career guidance in this countries; 3) empirical finding from quantitative and qualitative research of career/school counselors needs.

# **1. THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF EMPLOYABILITY AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH TO CAREER COUNSELLING**

## **1.1. Brief review of employability development theoretical issues**

Employability is a concept that can be used in a different context and with different meanings. According to Harvey (2001) employability is conceptualized as a continuous and distinct construct from employment which is constantly developed through an accumulation of new knowledge and experience throughout an individuals' lifetime. Employability has many definitions but researchers defined two groups of this phenomenon. The first group is related to the ability of the student to get, retain and develop a job after graduation. The other group is concerned with enhancing the students' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and abilities which empowering the student as a critical life-long learner (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Harvey, 2001). As indicate Harvey (Harvey at al., 2002), there is a distinction between the employability potential of the individual (a matter of self-development) and the actual employment of the individual (a matter mediated by external factors). This tendency to measure employability in terms of whether the graduate obtains a job after graduating only relates to the employability of new full-time graduates and is irrelevant as an indicator of the employability development of those already in work. The employment rate of graduates from higher education or vocational institutions is not an employability measure. Employability can only be applied to individuals. As indicate by Harvey (Harvey at al., 2002) employability is about how individuals engage with opportunities, reflect and articulate their skills and experiences. "Three core processes impact on employability: first the pedagogic process that encourages development; second, self-reflection by the student and third, articulation of experiences and abilities" (Harvey at al., 2002, p.17). So, according to Harvey (Harvey at al., 2002) is important to develop students' employability attributes, self-promotion, career management skills and willingness to learn and reflect on learning.

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

There are many employability theories which explain how people make career decisions. The discussions of the protean and boundaryless careers indicate that people change and modify their career ideas several times during their lifetime; they do not simply make one single career change. Career choices can be influenced by many factors, including family, friends, school, gender, the media, and factors which individuals have no control over. So, individuals have to learn to adapt to these factors and be flexible in order to remain employable throughout working lives. The concept of employability affects both individuals and society at large. Consequently, employability has been subjected to many studies (Sumanasiri et al, 2015 Smith et al, 2015; Finch et al, 2013; Wickramasighe & Perera, 2010; Chandrasiri, 2008; Pool & Sewell, 2007; Knight & Yorke, 2004; de la Harpe, et al., 2000; Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

One of the most popular and widely accepted definitions of employability is the capability to move sufficiently within the labour market and to realize one's potential thought of sustainable employment (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). Hillage and Pollard (1998) emphasized the following aspects within most definitions of employability: the ability to gain initial employment; the ability to maintain employment and make transitions between jobs and roles within the same organization to meet new job requirements; the ability to obtain new employment if required; the quality of work or organization. As indicate Hillage and Pollard (1998) employability for the individual depends on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context.

According to Watts (Watts, 2011), individuals who want to maintain their employability have to regularly learn new skills. Watts (Watts, 2006) proposed DOTS model which consists of "...planned experiences designed to facilitate the development of: Decision learning – decision-making skills; Opportunity awareness – knowing what work opportunities exist and what their requirements are; Transition learning – including job-search and self-presentation skills; Self-awareness – in terms of interests, abilities, values, etc. "(Watts, 2006, 9p.). Each component of DOTS model is defining more detailed the skills which must be trained through the career education process.

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

Knight and Yorke (2003) proposed the USEM model of employability, which is based on findings from the capability concept, cognitive and social psychology findings. USEM models is based on the acronym for Understanding (of disciplinary subject matter and how organizations work), Skills (subject-specific and generic), Efficacy beliefs (reflects the learner's notion of self, their self-belief, and the possibility for self-improvement and development), and Metacognition (complements efficacy, embraces self-awareness, how to learn and reflection and it encompasses knowledge of strategies for learning, thinking and problem-solving, and supports and promotes continued learning/lifelong learning).

CareerEDGE model is an alternative model of employability which combines all the main factors of USEM. According to Pool & Sewell (2007) CareerEDGE model presents a practical and simple overview of the relevant factors included in the employability process. Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills according Pool and Sewell (2007) have to be a central concept in the CareerEDGE model, because the main motive to enter higher education is generally perceived to be to study a specific discipline in depth, to gain a degree, get a higher qualification and get a good job, have a greater employment opportunities and recognize that employers will judge graduates on the basis of how successfully they completed their degree course. Generic skills concept in this model is used to represent the skills which can support study in any discipline and which can potentially be transferred to a range of contexts in higher education or the workplace. Emotional intelligence according Pool and Sewell (2007) in order to achieve true employability potential, a graduate will need to have well developed emotional intelligence competencies. Career development learning, based on the DOTS model according to Pool and Sewell (2007) should include activities that help students to become more self-aware, to enable them to give real consideration to the things that they interested in, to motivate them and suit their personalities. Pool and Sewell (2007) emphasize the importance to provide students with the opportunities to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding and attributes, but also is important to provide opportunities for reflection on and evaluation of learning experience. Fugate et al. (2004) argue that employability depends on certain discrete competencies, identifiable personal characteristics that can be assessed and possibly trained. According to

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

Fugate et al. (2004) employability is conceptualized as a form of work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunities. Savickas (2009) also indicated that occupational prospects seem less definable and predictable, with job transitions more frequent and difficult and that these changes require workers to develop skills and competencies that differ substantially from the knowledge and abilities required by 20<sup>th</sup>-century occupations. According to his opinion (Savickas, 2009) is necessary shifts in career models and counseling methods is to broaden the perspective from simple advice for vocational decision making expertise in co-construction and accompaniment of more holistic life design. Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that denotes the resources individuals need to successfully manage current and anticipated career transitions (Savickas, 1997, 2005). In career construction theory, adaptability resources help to form the strategies that individuals use to direct their adaptive behaviors and help people to manage career transitions. Adapting responses are actual behaviors that help individuals to meet changing conditions, and finally, adaptation results, are the successful outcomes of adapting (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Despite the diversity in defining the concept of employability, researchers have pointed out the importance of inclusion of employability skills in the high school/vocational school curriculum (Choi et al., 2015). It may be the development of career programmes or career education which create the opportunity for students to acquire of essential employability skills.

### **1.2. Positive psychology (counselling) methods for career guidance and employability training**

Positive Psychology (PPsy) is defined as the scientific study of positive experiences and positive individual traits. The aim is to nurture positive emotions, identify strengths and foster virtues with the goal of sustainable happiness. PP's focus on factors like understanding and exercising personal values, life satisfaction and happiness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Traditionally, career psychology and PPsy has had long-standing roots, as career psychology has historically manifested many positive psychology principles, such as a focus upon client

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

development, abilities, and strengths, career planning has focused on uncovering personal preferences and interests, often drawing from personality indicators, interest inventories and aptitude testing (Long, 2015; Magyar-Moe, Owens, Conoley, 2015). Robertson (2015) argued that Positive psychology has great resonance with career counselling. Many authors stressed that vocational psychology has always been focused on strengths or positive functioning, effectively contributing to positive psychology before it was even invented (Robitscheck & Woodson, 2006; Savickas, 2008). Magyar-Moe etc. (2015) overviewing vocational theories emphasized, that over time the theoretical view of vocational psychology and practice of career counseling has continued to move further away from the goal of finding a “good fit” to a greater emphasis on adaptability. According Robitschek & Woodson (2006), Krumboltz’s (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996) theory of career counselling is one of the clearest examples of how to address positive psychological functioning in counselling practice.

Researches outline several ways that Positive Psychology approaches can be used in secondary and post-secondary settings to enhance the career planning process. These approaches include using interview strategies that draw out themes of optimism, hope, love of learning, justice, enthusiasm and persistence to support students to consider their career choice within the greater context of their identity (Miller, Ciccocioppo & Flessati, 2013). Counselling interventions can reveal intrinsic sources of motivation, help clients to identify core strengths, and frame these as transferable to a number of settings. Thus, Robertson (2018) emphasized, that in general Positive psychology have the possibility to enrich the approach of career development and provide a fruitful focus on well-being. Several PPsy constructs – positive emotions, well-being, optimism and hope – have been examined very wide in the context of career counselling and vocational psychology. In the last decade, the definition of vocational success has shifted from objective measures (e.g., promotions, retention) to subjective measures (e.g., satisfaction, contentment) with an increasing focus on understanding career well-being or job-specific well-being (Magyar-Moe, Owens, Conoley, 2015). Studies found that experiencing positive emotions enhances our decision making process and performance, improves closeness between people and emotional well-being (Burke & Minton, 2013). Optimism and flexibility were the best predictors of success



## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

in one's career. Individuals with higher optimism had greater levels of career planning and exploration, confidence in career decisions, and more goals related to careers (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2002). London & Noe (1997) stated that career resilience is more personally driven and is generally established in early ages (during the adolescent years and the early 20s). They believed that people can learn to be resilient and hardy through positive reinforcement for exercising their judgments and acting independently. Constructive performance feedback can increase an individual's confidence and self-esteem. Encouragement of autonomy and creativity, provision of opportunities for taking risks without severe negative consequences, and the creation of teamwork opportunities can also facilitate an individual's career resilience. Owens and colleagues (2015) examined the outcomes of a two session strengths-based career counselling protocol. Depending on the experimental condition, participants took (a) the StrengthsFinder (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006) and completed strength-oriented exercises, (b) the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; Donnay, Morris, Schaubhut, & Thompson, 2005) and completed interest-oriented exercises, or (c) both the SII and StrengthsFinder along with a combination of the interest and strengths-oriented exercises. Main effects emerged for environmental exploration, intended-systematic exploration, frequency in the amount of information sought, amount of information acquired, focus, satisfaction with information, employee outlook, and certainty of career exploration outcomes (components of career exploration), as well as career decision self-efficacy. Furthermore, several variables of career exploration (focus, satisfaction with information, and employee outlook) and life satisfaction increased most in the combined strengths and interest protocol compared to the strengths protocol.

Researches presented the ways, how to implement positive psychology ideas, especially positive human functioning, in training counselling psychologists in vocational psychology. According to Robitschek & Woodson (2006) maintaining a positive focus in training will be easy, as it is an integral and inherent aspect of many vocational psychology theories and interventions. One of the challenges in training, however, will be to make this focus explicit. Although vocational psychology at times addresses specific problems, for example, unemployment and workplace

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

discrimination, we should encourage students to maintain a balanced focus on solving problems and building on strengths, even when responding to difficulties and traumas.

## 2. PROJECT PARTNER COUNTRIES LITERATURE REVIEW ANALYSIS ON CAREER COUNSELLORS AND CAREER GUIDANCE IN THEIR COUNTRIES

The main purpose of a comprehensive educational and developmental guidance in a school setting foremost is to promote and enhance the learning process, to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills and values to make informed decisions at each key education stage for successful transition from school to further education or work, and to manage their career pathways and lifelong learning throughout their lives. Comprehensive educational guidance in a school setting typically is implementing in a three domain: academic development, personal/social development and career development. Students need to learn strategies that will equip them to plan and manage their learning and career pathways at and beyond school. Career education and guidance is an inherent element of every school's provision education. It assists students to make decisions at key transition points and supports their successful transition from school to further education or work. The educational and career guidance process is developed in each partner country of SUCCESS project but in different levels.

At a **macro** level, we can state that legal basis and policy issues of educational and career guidance in project partner countries are relevant to comprehensive requirements of the guidance system in school.

1) On State level in educational sector the different Ministries are responsible for career guidance policy related to the provision of quality career education, information and counselling services for students, adult learners, etc.:

- In Italy careers guidance falls under the competence of the Ministry of Labour (adult career guidance), the Ministry of the University (career guidance of students at the university), the

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

Ministry of Education (careers guidance of students at primary and secondary school), the Regions and the Provinces.

- Career information, guidance and counselling services in Ireland are diverse and the public sector plays the dominant role, but in practice service delivery is shared between many different government agencies, with the private sector, and organizations that represent guidance practitioners :National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE); Department of Education and Skills (DES); SOLAS (the State Organization with responsibility for funding, planning and coordinating Further Education and Training); Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and etc.

- School and career guidance and counselling in the Greek public schools are under the instructions and supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, which is responsible for the primary, secondary and university studies.

- The Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES) operate under the umbrella of the Secondary Education Administration of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture.

- In Lithuania the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for career guidance policy related to the provision of quality career education, information and counselling services

2) Career guidance and counseling is defined in main education documents (Law, Acts, guidelines, etc.). According project partners reports, in all partner countries legal basis for career guidance and counseling is sufficient. Career guidance in project partner countries accommodate the same trends prevailing in Europe. It means that career guidance is being recognized as a basic component of the lifelong learning strategy and a fundamental part of employment policy:

- In Ireland Education Act of 1998, (DES, 2005), which states that “A recognized school shall....use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices”; The Education Act, 1998 (Section 9); The DES defines aims to improve provision in the National Skills Strategy 2025 (2016a) to support the development of a “...well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force...”, the specific aspects of the strategy that relate to guidance provision are - the integration of employer

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

engagement in the guidance curriculum; an emphasis on teaching soft skills or career management skills to students; and a review of current national guidance services, guidance tools, and careers information.

- In Lithuania The Law on Education article 18 defines purposes of career guidance "by measures of vocational information, vocational counselling and teaching for a career to help a person to choose education and employment, to acquire career planning and management competences and to actively shape his professional career'. In 2012 the Ministry of Education and Science adopted two documents: the Procedure on Implementation of Career Guidance ( Profesinio orientavimo vykdymo tvarka, 2012) and Career Education programme ( Ugdymo karjerai programa, 2012), which defines how career guidance services are to be implemented in the educational sector on national, municipality and school level and defines the career competences that have to be developed by the students at general education schools and vocational education schools.

- In Italy governments have introduced a number of ambitious policy reforms of its labour market (2014 Jobs Act), education system (2015 Good School Act) and innovation system (2015 National Plan for Digital Schools and Industry 4.0 National Plan 2017-2020) and etc.

3) The funding policy of governments is determining the quality of career guidance system. Unfortunately, all project partner countries have limitations in financial resources of guidance services. For example: in Ireland , since 1972 guidance counsellors were employed outside of general teacher allocation but in 2012 as a result of budgetary constraints guidance counsellors were reverted back to general allocation and the removal of ex-quota guidance has had catastrophic results for guidance counselling in post-primary education in Ireland; Career education and guidance within secondary schools have been given low priority and funding when compared to other curriculum areas in Lithuania; the political, social, and economic changes in Greece, especially after the burst of the financial crisis in 2008, create shift from the regime of school counsellors to supervisors and formed that progressive activities in guidance process are cancelled and etc.

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

At **micro** level it is important what resources career counselors have and are used in partner countries. The analysis of countries reports shows that there is a gap between the statements of legal documents, requirements, guidelines content and reality in school guidance system, counselors qualifications and quality of guidance services which get students of high school.

1) Counselling competencies considered essential to effective career counseling. Career counselors must demonstrate minimum requirements of the competencies (knowledge of general counseling theories and techniques and knowledge of career development theories; ability to use appropriate counseling techniques in effectively assisting individuals with career choice and life-career concerns and skills in building a productive relationship between counselor and client). The reports show that the majority of career counselors in partner countries lack the qualifications for career guidance and counseling. For example: in Italy professionals who provide career education and guidance in schools often lack specialized training. Those who provide career education and guidance in schools are often not career guidance specialists. They very often combine career guidance with other roles: teaching other school subjects, providing counselling and guidance for personal problems and study difficulties. In Cyprus people appointed as counsellors were teachers with limited training in guidance and counselling and were expected to perform their additional duties on top of teaching.

2) Reports analysis show that only few partner countries have career counselors training opportunities. For example, Ireland currently has had 9 DES recognized courses, primarily part-time, in 5 universities ranging from postgraduate diplomas to MScs, and MEds. But in Lithuania admission to study programs of career counselling was suspended. All partner countries introduce courses, workshops for career professionals to develop their qualification in this field.

3) Reports analysis show, that for many people at school who are responsible for career guidance, the duties of career counselling and guidance are only extra job and as they stated they felt they had insufficient time to tend to their guidance duties. This means that pupils get a very small part of career guidance services (mostly some kind of career information).

4. In reports is stated that career guidance staff do not have the resources they need to do the job properly: a private space where students can be interviewed; a library of up-to-date career information; a computer; access to a telephone; secretarial assistance and etc.

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

We have to state that there is a need to up-date the duties of career counsellors, to develop their qualification, to enlarge their counseling skills to provide more career services for students.

### **3. RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF CAREER/SCHOOL COUNSELORS NEEDS**

#### **3.1. Focus Groups (FG) results of career counsellor's need's**

*Methodology.* Focus groups are generally used to collect data on a specific topic. They provide insights into how people think and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. It was created 5 stages process for conducting FG:

1. Study purpose. Career counsellors needs, challenges and future directions in training.
2. Methodology. Conceptualization: \*study population and sample, \*questions, \*schedule for planning FG (contact list, site, invitation, materials)
3. Facilitation. Selection of facilitator, focus group theme, preparation work (the script, rules, materials, etc.)
4. Analysis. Themes, sub-themes
5. Reports

The process was presented at the first project partners meeting– Kick-off - in Vilnius (24-25.10.2017). After the discussions, project partners have agreed on FG study population and sample: 2 groups with career counselling experts in each country (approximately - 6+6=12 persons) and discussed the rules of questions construction (5 questions, open-ended, issue – career counselling). All necessary documents were prepared – participants contact sheet, invitation letter, Script, registration form, participants' socio-demographic questionnaire, FG evaluation form, discussion protocol, and report form.

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

*Results of FG.* One of the questions presented to all participants in FG was “WHICH EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT IN CAREER GUIDANCE/COUNSELLING”. Below you can see the list of skills with the names of countries, where the career counsellors mentioned those skills. In the first place is the skill, which was mentioned in all countries. In the second – which were mentioned in 4 countries, in the third – which were mentioned in 3 countries. And in the fourth – mentioned in two countries and fifth - only one country.

### The most important employability skills:

Position	Skills	Countries
<b>I</b>	Team work. team building	LT, IT, CY, EL, IE
<b>II</b>	Flexibility	LT, IT, CY, EL
<b>III</b>	Self-awareness	LT, EL, IE
	Self-presentation	LT, EL, IE
	Adaptability	IT, CY, IE
	Communication	IT, EL, IE
	Conflict resolution, negotiation	LY, EL, IE
<b>IV</b>	Decision making	LT, EL
	Positive thinking	CY, EL
	Resilience	CY, EL
	Creativity, creative thinking	LT, EL
	Time management	LT, EL
	Emotional intelligence	CY, EL
	Self-confidence	CY, IE
	Critical thinking	CY, EL
	Empathy	EL, IE
	Problem solving	EL, IE
<b>V</b>	Proactivity	IT

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

	Cooperation	LT
	Imagination	CY
	Listening skills	IT
	Personal development	CY)
	Stress management	CY

As we can see from the list – FG participants mentioned many skills as the most important in career counselling. Only one skill – team work, team building – was mentioned in all FG in all countries.

The other question, which was given to the participants of FG: “DO STUDENTS GET INFORMED ABOUT LABOUR MARKET”. Participants from some countries expressed the need of a wider presentation of labour market demands, changes in the labour market. They mentioned the need of information about labour market not only at the concrete moment. They need future prognosis in economics and job possibilities. Participants from some countries expressed doubts about the importance of information from labour market in career counselling: *„Rather than look at the demands of the labour market, which can come and go by the time they finish college, we look at matching their skills to what they want to do“*(IE). Participants mentioned the reasons, why they are not using information from labour market: *“Career counselling is almost non-existent on the pretext that there is limited time that must be used to cover the syllabus“*(EL), *“Students tend to focus on what they want to study and not to what qualifications are needed to get into the real job market and to maintain a job position”* (CY), *“We leave it up to the student to research labour market demands”* (IE). Career counsellors from Lithuania indicated that while choosing their future profession, students are more relying on high school study programmes, but not on the information from labour market: *“In this process, they are thinking only about studies, but not about future career”* (LT).

The Third question was “HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW AND HOW OFTEN DO YOU APPLY THE MAIN IDEAS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN CAREER



## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

GUIDANCE/COUNSELLING?”. The discussions on this question in all countries revealed, that career counsellors do not have extended knowledge on basic ideas of Positive Psychology. Counsellors apply the principles of Positive Psychology in an indirect way. During the counselling sessions they intend to enhance student’s self-esteem in order to experience more positive emotions and develop psychological resilience, but “*school counsellors have limited knowledge, tools and exercises to apply*” (EL). Counsellors from Lithuania mentioned, that they always apply to students’ personal strengths. It is like a starting point in career counselling: “*It happens naturally*” (LT). “*We use a strengths-based approach anyway, so it may not formally be called positive psychology, but it’s just a different terminology*” (IE). Counsellors from all countries stressed, that they lack comprehensive and extent knowledge of the main key issues of Positive Psychology. Especially career counsellors were interested in resilience. Participants even expressed the need of enhancing their own resilience (LT, CY).

Analysis of answers to the question ‘TOOLS AND MODELS USUALLY USED IN CAREER COUNSELLING’ show that there is no one specific model, which career counsellors use. Career counsellors in Ireland are combining different models: “*I use the eclectic counselling model, reality therapy and family systems therapy*”, “*CBT, motivational interviewing, a solution focused approach etc.*” (IE). In the Report of FG from Cyprus it is concluded, that “There are some specific models that have been given to the counsellors in the form of manuals which, however, do not seem to be prevalent for a variety of reasons. It seems there is no methodological approach or a specific management plan for using these tools” (FG analysis. Cyprus case). The tools/models which are usually used in counselling process depend on career counsellors educational background and special training on career counselling. So, they are different in different countries.

The last question was “DO YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES TO APPLY EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH IN CAREER COUNSELLING AND IN WHAT FORMAT?” All FG participants agree that they need more information on employability skills combined with Positive psychology approach in career counselling. FG participants in different countries get their

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

suggestions/recommendations for tool, training: Information online (IE, CY, LT); Interactive tool (real case scenarios, games, videos, etc. (CY, IE); Face to face training (IE); Applications on Smart Phones (CY) and etc. In some countries, special interest was expressed towards the resilience concept (IT, CY, LT). The Greece Focus Group Report ended with the sentence: "The need for the development of a training package in this field is imperative".

### **3.2. Results of quantitative study of counsellor's needs**

*Methodology.* An online survey was used to gather the data. The questionnaire was aimed at identifying school counsellors' needs and work experiences.

The survey was anonymous, without any possibility of identifying respondent identity. Study participants were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and analysed in an aggregate manner only. Participation in the survey was voluntary, participants were not remunerated for their participations and could withdraw at any time.

Most questions can be answered by marking one most appropriate answer. Guidelines and instructions for answering the questions are typed in italics.

This questionnaire should have taken approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Firstly, the participants were asked to provide information about their age, gender, the highest level of education completed, the current role in their school, the number of years of career guidance/counselling experience they have, the size of the school they work at and the geographical area the school is located, the grade of students that they mainly work with as counsellors.

Secondly, the career counsellors were asked to indicate how often they work with students who: 1) come from ethnic minorities; 2) have special learning needs; 3) are of varying socio-economic status; 4) are of varying immigrant status; 5) are of grade level readiness; 6) are gifted; 7) are without strong career motivation; 8) are early school leavers. The responses were provided on 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 – never to 5 – very often.

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

Thirdly, the career counsellors were asked to indicate the amount of work (in %) that they spend for each of the following tasks: 1) career information (providing information/advice on labour market opportunities, job search, etc.); 2) career assessment (aptitude/value/interest assessment and self-assessment); 3) career training/education (delivering career management and employability skill training modules and seminars); 4) career counselling based on psychological tools and methods; 5) career counselling based on non-psychological tools and methods.

Fourthly, career counsellors were asked to think of their own professional development needs and to indicate the extent to which they need to improve their knowledge or skills in the following areas: 1) gaining more knowledge on career guidance content and performance standards in career guidance/counselling; 2) increasing knowledge and/or understanding of the main theoretical career counselling models; 3) increasing knowledge and understanding about student career goals and employability needs; 4) increasing knowledge, practical skills and understanding of career counselling practices; 5) increasing knowledge, practical skills and/or understanding about of career information practices; 6) increasing knowledge, practical skills and/or understanding about student career assessment practices; 7) receiving additional training on career management and student employability skills development; 8) receiving additional training on career counselling for students with special needs; 9) improving your ICT skills for career guidance/counselling.

The response scale was from: 1 – no need at all to 4 - strong need.

Moreover, the study participants were also asked to identify their satisfaction with their job in general and with their job as career/school counsellors. The responses could be marked on a ten-point scale with 1 – very dissatisfied and 10 – very satisfied.

Finally, counsellors were to indicate to what extent they have been able to achieve their work goals over the last year using the scale from 0% to 100%.

*Participants and results.* In total 324 career counsellors from Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Lithuania participated in the study. There were 32 career counsellor from Cyprus, 60 from Greece, 58 from Ireland, 52 from Italy, and 119 from Lithuania.

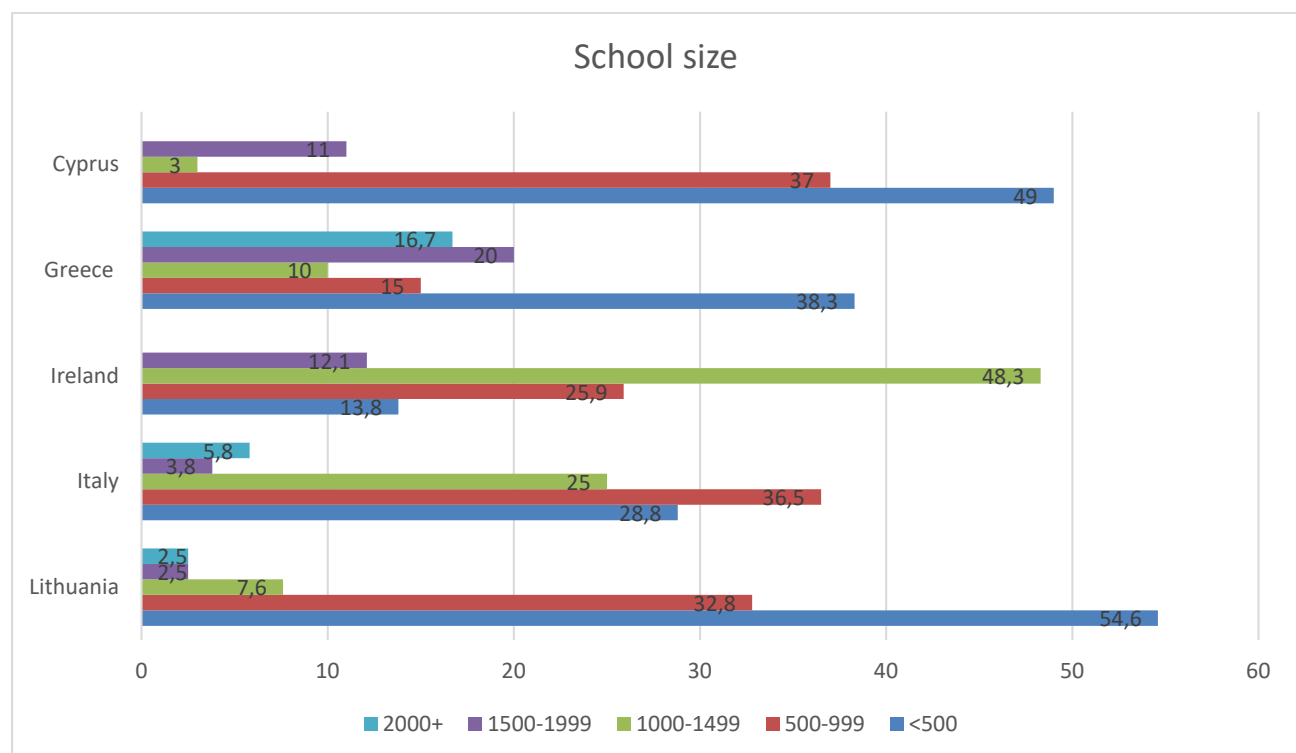
## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

285 participants were female (69% in Cyprus, 95% in Greece, 79% in Ireland, 75% in Italy, and 99% in Lithuania) and 39 were male (31% in Cyprus, 5% in Greece, 21% in Ireland, 25% in Italy, and 1% in Lithuania).

Most of the participants who completed the online questionnaires were 30–39 years old. Most of career counsellors have from 2 to 10 years of experience in career counselling.

There are differences among countries regarding the role that career counsellors have at school. While in Cyprus and Italy most of career counsellors occupy the position of counsellor, in Lithuania the career counselling is provided by psychologists while in Italy – by teachers.

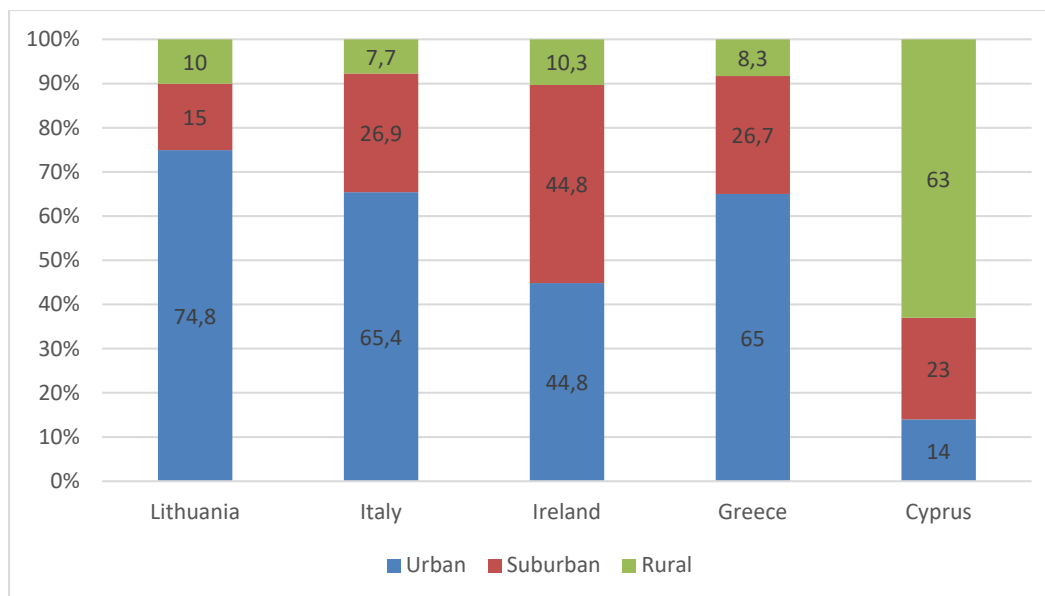
There are differences among countries regarding the size of school. More than 50% of schools in Lithuania have less than 500 students, while in Ireland almost 50% of schools have from 1000 to 1499 students.



**Picture 1. The size of school.**

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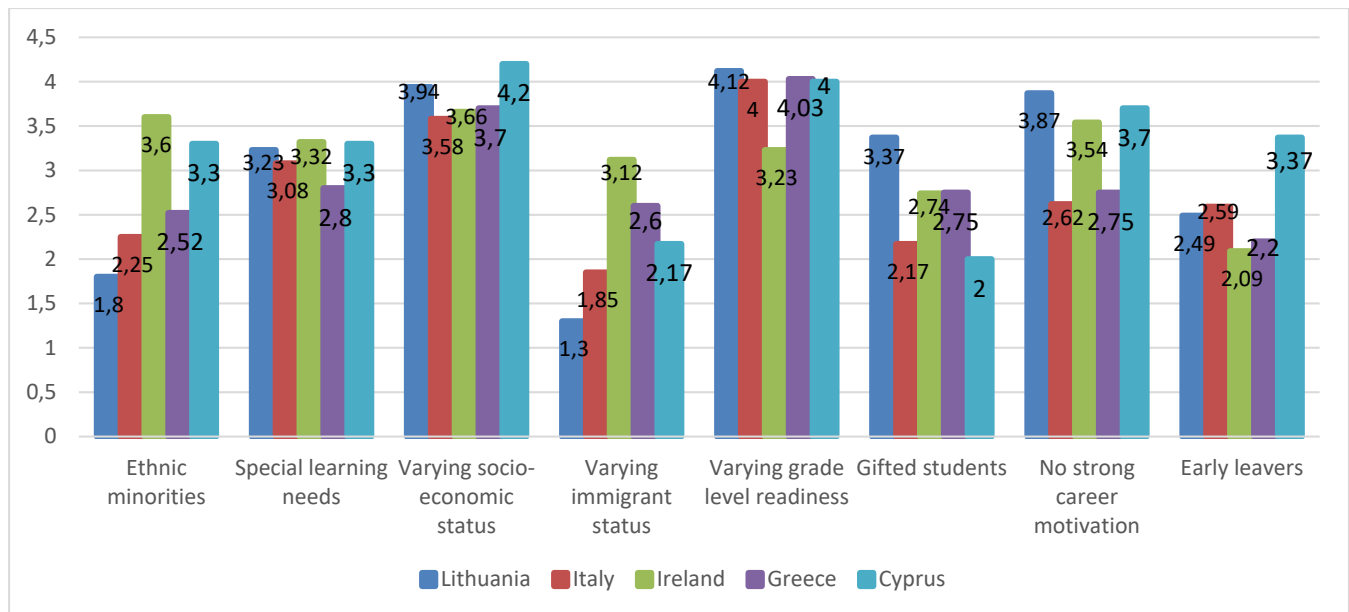
Most schools in all countries are located in urban areas, except Cyprus, where most schools are situated in rural area (Picture2).



**Picture2. Location of school**

Most of the career counsellors that participated in the study, most often work with students of grade 9 – grade 10.

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors



**Picture3. The groups of students that career counsellors work with**

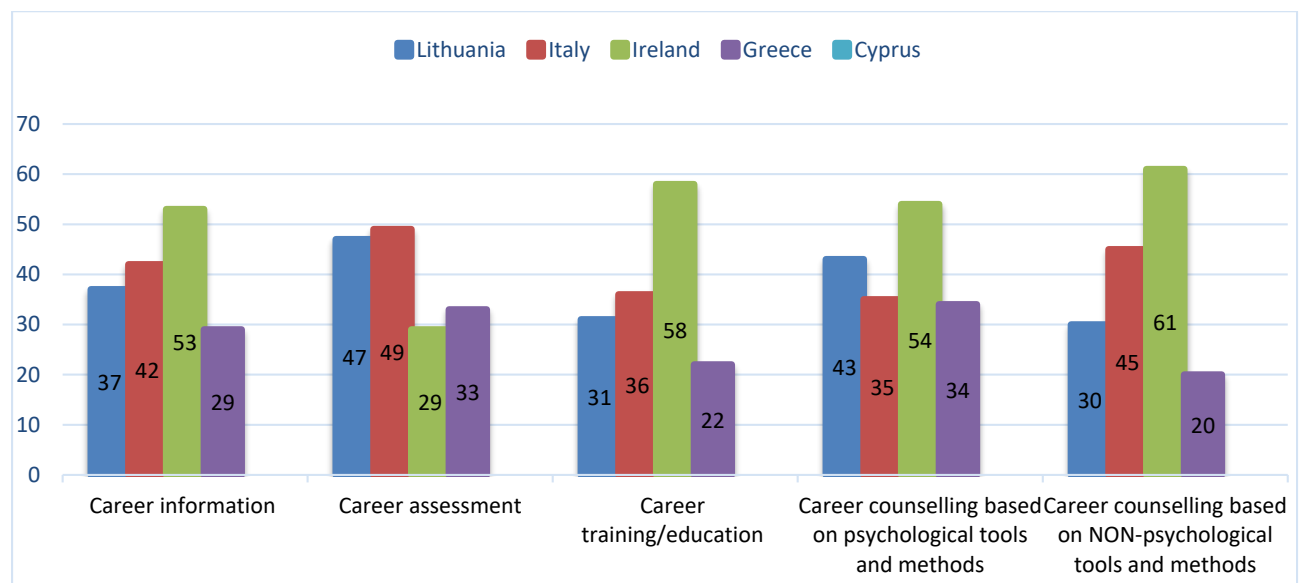
The differences among countries could be observed when analysing the groups of students that career counsellors work with.

In Ireland career counsellors frequently work with ethnic minorities and students of varying immigrant status, while counsellors in Lithuania encounter these groups of students most rarely. Lithuanian career counsellors, on the other hand, work most frequently with gifted students and with those, who do not have strong career motivation. In Cyprus, on the contrary, career counsellors do not often work with gifted students, but most frequently encounter students that are of varying socio-economic status and grade level readiness, and do not have strong career motivation. Moreover, in Ireland, Greece, Italy counsellors most often deal with students that come from ethnic minorities and are of varying immigrant status, while the least encountered group are students of varying level of readiness. Furthermore, countries do not strongly differ in frequency of working with students who are of varying socio-economic status and different level of readiness, and who have special learning needs.

When analysing the amount of work (in %) that career counsellors spend for various tasks (Picture4 ), it was found that Irish counsellors encounter the greatest variety of counselling tasks,

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

while Greek counsellors have the smallest variety of tasks. The biggest difference among countries were found in tasks aimed at career training/education (i.e. delivering career management and employability skill training modules and seminars) with Irish counsellors spending almost 60% for these tasks and Greek counsellors spending only 22% of their time. The similar pattern of results was observed in tasks devoted for career counselling based on non-psychological tools and methods. There were no distinct differences in career assessment (aptitude/value/interest assessment and self-assessment) tasks and counselling based on psychological tools and methods.



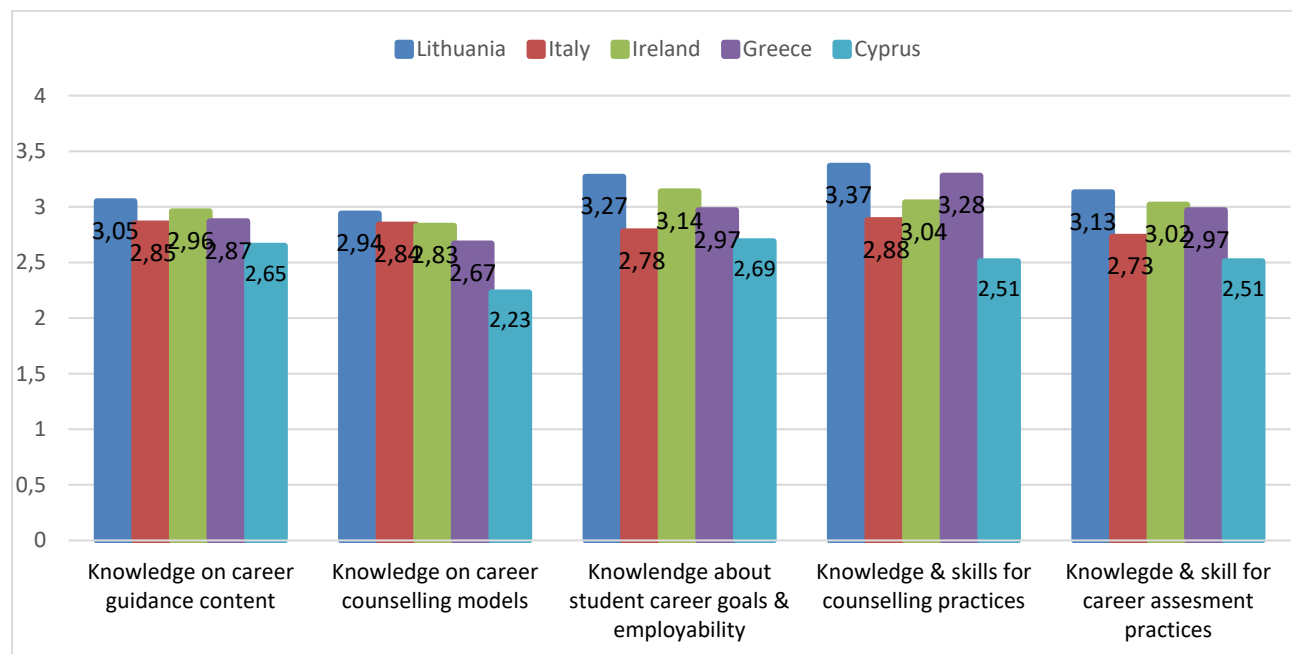
**Picture4. The amount of work spent on counselling tasks.**

Notably, the most important results of the study are related to identifying the needs for own professional development. The results are presented Picture 5 and Picture 6.

The results presented in Picture 5 show that Lithuanian career counsellors exhibit the biggest needs for 8 out of 9 needs, namely, gaining more knowledge on career guidance content and performance standards in career guidance/counselling; increasing knowledge and/or understanding of the main theoretical career counselling models; increasing knowledge and understanding about student career goals and employability needs; increasing knowledge,

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

practical skills and understanding of career counselling practices; increasing knowledge, practical skills and/or understanding about of career information practices; increasing knowledge, practical skills and/or understanding about student career assessment practices; receiving additional training on career management and student employability skills development; and receiving additional training on career counselling for students with special needs.



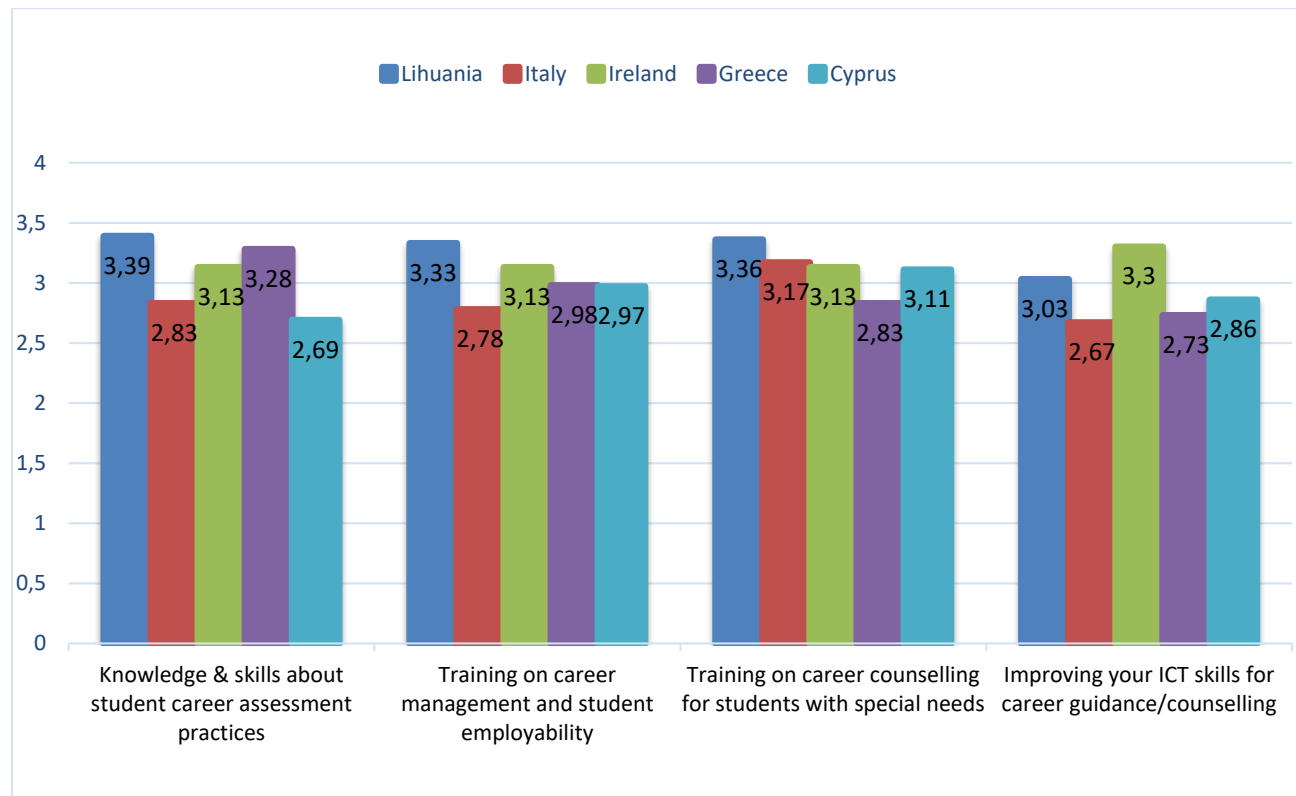
**Picture5. The need for own professional development (1).**

On contrary, the career counsellors from Cyprus expressed the lowest needs for gaining more knowledge on career guidance content and performance standards in career guidance/counselling; increasing knowledge and/or understanding of the main theoretical career counselling models; increasing knowledge and understanding about student career goals and employability needs; increasing knowledge, practical skills and understanding of career counselling practices; increasing knowledge, practical skills and/or understanding about of career information practices; and increasing knowledge, practical skills and/or understanding about student career assessment practices. The lowest need for receiving additional training on



## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors

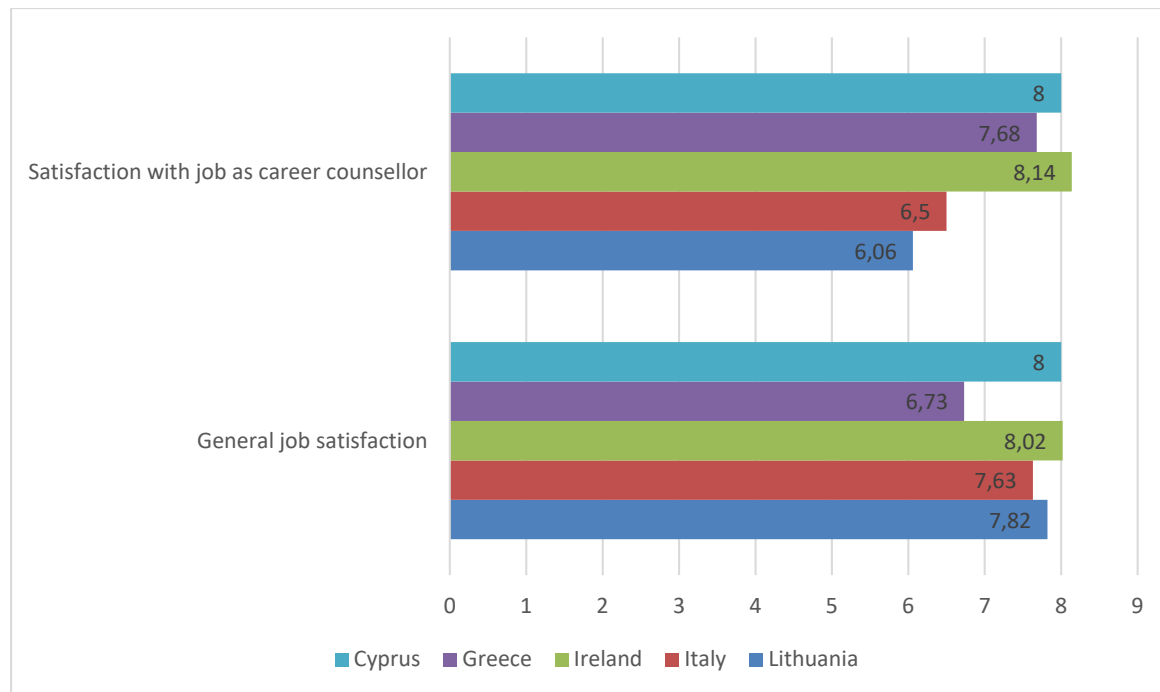
career management and student employability skills development were expressed by Italian counsellors, while the lowest need for receiving additional training on career counselling for students with special needs was expressed by Greek counsellors.



**Picture6. The need for own professional development (2).**

The career counsellors were also asked to indicate the general satisfaction with their jobs and satisfaction with job as career counsellor. The analysis of the results revealed the level of satisfaction are above the mean. Moreover, participants have higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs as career counsellor than general job satisfaction.

## IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors



**Picture7. The levels of job satisfaction among countries.**

The amount of career counsellors annual goal attainment in all partner countries vary from 71 to 80 percent.

## Conclusions

Thus, career counselling is only one of many duties, functions of teacher, psychologist, social worker etc. Only in Greece there is career counselling position at school. A significant amount of schools counsellor's time is dedicated to counselling of children with various emotional and behaviour difficulties, communication with teachers, parents etc. Majority of the career counsellors worked with students of grade 9 – grade 10. However, when analyzing the characteristics of students that career counsellors from different countries encounter, the biggest differences could be observed regarding the students who come from ethnic minorities, are of

## **IO1. Exploring and Revising Current Needs of School Counselors**

varying immigrant status, are gifted and do not have strong career motivation. Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Lithuania do not strongly differ in frequency of working with students who are of varying socio-economic status and different level of readiness, and who have special learning needs. In the Project partner's countries, the counsellor's educational background is very different (from psychology degree till agricultural or political sciences degrees). Despite the differences in attitude regarding counsellor's professional development, all counsellors indicated higher than average need for professional development. FG discussions in all partner countries also show that career counsellors are not familiar with contemporary counseling models on basic ideas of Positive Psychology. The counselling tools and models usually used at school practice depended on career counsellors educational background and special trainings on career counselling. According to the career counsellors from all project countries, the most important employability skills in career guidance/counselling are Team work and Team building. The second position was given for Flexibility and the third - Self-awareness, Self-presentation, Adaptability, Communication, Conflict resolution, Negotiation. The results showed that counsellors in all project countries do not have extended knowledge on basic ideas of Positive Psychology. The counsellors expressed the need of more information about the possibilities to apply employability skills and positive psychology approach in career counselling.

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