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## ***FAMICO: Family Career Compass, Report from the Conference, Istanbul, November 4, 2015***

On 4 November, 2015, an international conference on effective career guidance approaches supporting parents in guiding their children's vocational career was held by the University of Bahçeşehir (BAU) in the European part of Istanbul, Turkey. The conference was to sum up the outcomes of the FAMICO project (EACEA Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation, Project No: 2013-1 – PL1 – LEO05-37576) and their dissemination as well as to define new tasks for career guidance in addressing the family contexts and environments.

In the application part of the session, Dr Anna Paszkowska-Rogacz, representing the project coordinator, described aims and final outcomes of the FAMICO project – an international, European Commission-supported project implemented by a partnership of six institutions from different EU countries under the Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Programme. The main objective of the project was to provide professional counsellors with tools and methods as well as to define and foster proper attitudes in working with families and children in all age-groups. The FAMICO project grew up from the results of the previous project (Parents Vocational Trainers) focused on the role of parents as mediators in their children's apt career choice-making. The work of six institutions from Austria, Slovenia, Turkey and Greece was coordinated by the University of Social Sciences in Lodz, Poland.

The educational concept of the FAMICO project was underpinned by the studies of Donald E. Super and Charles M. Super (2001) and Linda S. Gottfredson (2005), who agreed that different age groups of children required different counselling interventions and approaches.

Training programs and manuals developed within the FAMICO project have been constructed in keeping with this view and include three sections addressed, specifically, to parents and counsellors of youngsters aged 6-12, 13-15 and 16-18 years of age, respectively.

The chief outcomes of the completed project include training programs based on a mixed learning method (blended learning) for school career counsellors, career counsellors and parents; handbooks for career-vocational counsellors *How to cooperate with parents in shaping the vocational career of their children at a certain*

age and for parents *How to help a child in making a vocational career decision*, both divided into three parts, each focused on children in a different age-group; and an educational platform for career or vocational counsellors and parents, which presents a repository of materials and provides a space for exchange of knowledge and mutual learning. The structure and tasks of the educational platform were described by Dr Orhan Gökçöl from BAU.

Further presentations, given by representatives of the project partners (Anna Paszkowska-Rogacz, University of Social Sciences, Poland; Marusa Goršak, KADIS, Slovenia; Maria Koutsafti, Doukas School, Greece; Claudia Liebeswar, abif, Austria; and Tunç Bozbura, BAU, Turkey), reported on the implementation of the project objectives under the pilot training schemes for counsellors working with parents. Conducted in five countries, the training sessions were attended by a total of 165 school career counsellors. They proved greatly interesting both to the professionals and to educational authorities.

The second part of the conference included papers by three invited experts and a panel discussion. The first talk titled “Career Development as a Lifelong Learning Process Anchored in Culture: What is the Role of Parents?” was given by Anna Bilon from the University of Lower Silesia, Wroclaw, Poland. Drawing on Gert Hofstede’s idea of cultural differences, she presented the concept of “career learning,” focusing on how the role of parents involved in the process varies due to cultural factors. The presentation tackled the cultural dilemmas which emerged and had to be solved in the implementation of the FAMICO project and the development of educational and training materials for parents from five different cultures.

The second lecture titled “Being a Traveller within Family Systems: Putting the Pieces Together” was given by Fulya Kurter, lecturer and director of the Career Centre at BAU, and therapist Zerka Moreno from the Psychodrama Institute (Istanbul, Turkey). They focused on the concept of family as a system of specific dynamics and suggested that young people’s career choices should be considered in a holistic framework. They presented research results indicating diverse and sometimes conflicting needs of children regarding parental interference in their career plans. The conclusions stressed that as specific modes of family functioning varied widely, depending on, particularly, poverty, alternative intervention methods, such as counselling based on home visits, should be urgently developed.

In his closing paper titled “Parents’ Role in Career Planning,” Kamil Kasaci, founder, trainer and coach at the Career Centre and Enterprise (KariyerIST Centre for Career and Entrepreneurship, Istanbul, Turkey), dwelled on career in the metaphorical terms of life as a journey. In this journey the parents, relying on the child’s resources, provide a counterweight to the education system, which is based on tests and examinations and, as such, does not prepare students for the key test – the test of “life.”

Rounding up the conference, the panel discussion triggered a lively response from the audience and developed into an interesting Q and A session. It was

attended by invited counselling theorists and practitioners: Anna Bilon of Poland, Fulya Kurter and Kamil Kasaci of Turkey, Angela Chougia of Greece, Tina Rutar Leban of Slovenia and Margit Voglhofer of Austria. The meeting of experts was chaired by Maria Koutsafti, President of the Hellenic Association of Career Counsellors. The discussion revolved around the question of how parents could be helped cope with the unpredictability of events if the counsellors themselves have not developed efficient strategies yet.

Concluding the discussion, Angela Chougi listed three recommendations for counsellors on how to collaborate with families and develop their resources promoting flexible adaptation to changes:

- 1) Get involved, but do not control!
- 2) Advise, but do not make decisions for the child!
- 3) Support, but do not abuse your power!

The conference wound up the work under the FAMICO project, but the dissemination of the outcomes will continue in the coming years. More information is available on the project website: [www.famico.eu](http://www.famico.eu)

*Translated from Polish by Anna Sołtys*

## References

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