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**First Training Event: Preventive Early Career Education**

**February 17-19, 2020, University of Padova**

**Final Report**

**1. Project Objectives**

The Arqus European University Alliance brings together the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padova and Vilnius, seven longstanding comprehensive research universities who share extensive experience in joint projects and a common profile as internationalized institutions with deep regional engagement in medium-sized cities.

Arqus aspires to build on the member universities’ sound prior experience in cooperation in order to achieve a high level of integration in its members’ policies and action plans in order to:

* enhance the education of critically engaged European and global citizens who are able and willing to contribute to a multicultural, multilingual and inclusive Europe which is open to the world;
* increase and improve the joint research capacity of the partner universities;
* better respond to the grand societal challenges of the 21st century in Europe and beyond.

Through enhanced sustained cooperation, the Arqus European University Alliance work together as a laboratory for institutional learning in an innovative and open way to:

* Attain a substantially higher level of quality in education and research, and deeper societal, cultural and civic engagement.
* Educate engaged critical European citizens to become competent decision-makers.
* Become a model for European university integration.
* Disseminate its experience, challenges and successes at European and global level.

One of the Arqus European University Alliance’s major goals for 2025 is widening access and inclusion. Specifically, the Alliance aims to promote widening access for diverse student and staff populations, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and attracting talent from less represented groups. The Alliance aims to develop shared policies for inclusion and diversity for all members of the university community.

Within this action line “Widening Access, Inclusion and Diversity”, emphasis is given to the task **2.1 Preventive early career education.**

Specifically,Arqus recognizes the essential role played in early guidance and counselling in helping school children to make informed decisions about participating in higher education and choosing a career, and in the reduction and eradication of gender and other bias. Arqus partner universities thus share best practice and existing models of interventions by universities and academics with primary and secondary school pupils, teachers and careers advisors. Career education aims at increasing primary school pupils’ knowledge of professional activities and role models, their self-determination, autonomous capacities to make a choice and soft-skills from very early stages. Arqus share models of, and resources for, preventive early career education activities to be implemented locally by each university. An annual joint Alliance training event is organized through the Arqus Academy for local experts, who then share their expertise at local training events for university and school staff involved and for future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors through the Arqus Faculties of Education.

**2. First Training event on Preventive early career education**

The First Training event on Preventive early career education was hosted by Larios Laboratory (Laboratory of Research and Intervention on Career Guidance; <http://www.larios.fisppa.unipd.it>) of the University of Padova and coordinated by dr. Maria Cristina Ginevra, from February 17th to 19th 2020. It represents the first effort developed by 2.1 task force of Arqus European University Alliance to share best practice and existing preventive models of early career education. It was an opportunity to engage in a collaborative workgroup series with the purpose of learning about the challenges, activities, and policies of career education in seven countries involved (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Spain).

Six workgroup sessions were organized, focused on the following six topics:

* Topic 1: Main Fears and Challenges Experienced by Young People in their Country
* Topic 2: Organization of the school and university system
* Topic 3: Overview of Career Guidance
* Topic 4: Career Guidance and Inclusion
* Topic 5: Accreditation frameworks for professionals delivering career guidance
* Topic 6: Good Career Education Practices

In addition to members of task 2.1 of the university of Padova, partners of the Universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, and Vilnius participated to the First Training event.

**3. Outcomes and Results of the First Training event**

Arqus partners debated that phenomena as globalization, technological progression, and societal changes have produced substantial changes in the labour market: Employment and work are more flexible, career transitions are more recurrent, and career paths are far less predictable than two decades ago (Savickas, 2015). The economic crisis that has hit Western countries over the last decade has had further effects on the labor market, with an increase in youth unemployment, especially in southern countries, and low access to decent work (Unitwin International Network, <https://wp.unil.ch/unitwin/>). Even children and youth appear to be influenced from this condition; generally, they tend to have negative perceptions about their future, that is, discomfort, uneasiness, and confusion, and limited propensity to think about multiple options and improvements in their future living conditions (Ginevra et al., 2016). This seems particularly true for youth who live in western countries with higher rate of unemployment and precariousness (e.g. Italy, Spain, Lithuania).

In relation to the challenges of the current world of work, Arqus partners shared the idea that it is crucial to help primary and secondary students develop the resources to prepare them for their career future and to cope with any difficult times that they may be going through. In addition to basic and advanced technical skills, children and youth must be equipped with the social emotional and resiliency skills, resources and attitudes necessary to successfully cope with the ever-changing, technology-rich job market (Hartung, 2015). According to the most recent and accredited theoretical framework in career literature (e.g. Life Design paradigm, Savickas et al., 2009; Social Cognitive Theory, Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1996; Lent & Brown, 2019), it was emphasized the need to adopt a lifespan and preventive perspective and considers childhood and youthhood as a crucial formative period in the process of career development. Although it is not urgent for children and youth to make imminent career decisions, it is important to start promoting positive career development trajectories during this developmental age (Ginevra & Nota, 2017; Savickas et al., 2009).

All this seems even more crucial for children and youth with disabilities and vulnerabilities (e.g. migrants, with low socio-economic status), who are more at risk in the current job market, especially because they often exhibit inadequate and irrational occupational beliefs regarding the world of work, lower soft skills, great difficulty in setting future goals, little information regarding occupational options, greater barriers and difficulties in the educational and school system (Hitchings et al., 2001; Lee, Rojewski, Gregg, & Jeong, 2015; Müller & VanGilder, 2014).

In relation to these premises, Arqus partners agreed that career guidance professionals serve an important social role in ‘preparing’ children and youth for the current and future world of work. Therefore, the training of career guidance professionals is an important issue, in order to make their professional actions more effective. Although there are no shared indications in the various countries on the training of career guidance professionals, according to the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC, <http://www.esvdc.org/>), the guidelines recently published by the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance & Counselling (NICE, 2012, 2015, <http://www.nice-network.eu/>), and the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC, <http://www.larios.fisppa.unipd.it/ecadoc/>) Arqus partners discussed that, through the attendance of high-quality post-university training courses, career guidance professionals should acquire knowledge and highly qualified skills, a scientifically based and up-to-date conceptual background, attitudes and values in order to better prepare future generations to cope with the complexity, uncertainty, and global challenges that characterize the labour market. It was also specified that the training programmes in Career Guidance and Counselling, in line with relevant United Nations declarations, should reflect current societal challenges and labour market needs and promote the inclusion of all citizens and their full participation in society, education and employment.

Finally, pilot experiences, good practices and career education interventions realized in each university were discussed and shared. Specifically, example of career counselling, university services for career guidance, peer tutoring activities, especially for students with disabilities were discussed. Moreover, from a primary preventive perspective, laboratories and career education interventions for children and youth developed by Larios Laboratory were presented.

The Training event ended with the shared goal to develop models of, and resources for, preventive early career education activities to be implemented locally by each university. Moreover, shared guidelines for university and school staff and for future primary and secondary school teachers and counsellors interested to career guidance will be developed.