



NON-FORMAL CAREER COUNSELLING TOOLKIT NO. 3

Exploring Career Opportunities

FROM CURIOSITY TO INVESTIGATION: GUIDING YOUTH THROUGH
MEANINGFUL CAREER EXPLORATION



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Career exploration is the active practice of investigating connections between emerging self-awareness and real-world opportunities. It is not a preparatory phase before "the decision," but a foundational process through which young people build career agency. For youth workers in non-formal settings, facilitating exploration means guiding young people beyond narrow social circles and passive information consumption toward structured, curiosity-driven investigation of workplaces, pathways, and labour market realities.

Research consistently shows that how exploration is framed matters profoundly. When exploration is presented as hypothesis-testing rather than option-selection, young people develop information literacy, cognitive flexibility, and tolerance for uncertainty. These capacities are essential for navigating volatile labour markets without premature closure or anxiety-driven decisions. In contrast, when exploration is framed as an obligation to choose, it often produces pressure, avoidance, or superficial engagement.

Exploration also manifests differently across developmental stages. Young people under 16 typically need concrete encounters that broaden awareness beyond family occupations or media stereotypes. Young people aged 16 and above require scaffolding to interpret, verify, and contextualise the overwhelming volume of digital career information they encounter. This chapter equips youth workers to support both groups through small-group dialogue (up to five participants) and experiential methods that turn abstract opportunities into concrete questions.

Importantly, the chapter focuses exclusively on the outward-facing dimension of exploration: how young people locate, evaluate, and test career-related information. It deliberately avoids conflating exploration with self-assessment (addressed elsewhere) or with planning and decision-making. When facilitated well, exploration becomes not a source of anxiety, but a sustainable practice that supports lifelong career adaptability.

Key concepts and definitions

Career exploration is an iterative process of gathering, interpreting, and testing information about occupations, education pathways, and labour market conditions in order to inform personal development. It consists of two interdependent strands.

The first strand is opportunity awareness: the ability to identify, notice, and evaluate real options beyond one's immediate social environment. Without deliberate support, many young people unconsciously eliminate options simply because they are invisible in their daily lives.

The second strand is information literacy: the capacity to locate career-related information, assess its credibility and relevance, and apply it to one's own context. In contemporary digital environments, this includes the ability to distinguish promotional content from factual data and to verify information across sources.

Career exploration differs from career planning, which focuses on sequencing steps toward a defined goal. Exploration prioritises breadth over depth, curiosity over commitment, and testing assumptions over making final decisions. In non-formal contexts, exploration is intentionally experiential. Site visits, peer dialogue, short interviews, and digital tools are used to make abstract opportunities tangible rather than relying solely on static informational materials.

What research shows across age groups

The findings presented in this section are based on the Study report on the need for non-formal career counselling services for youth, conducted by Staliūnas and Stasiukynas (2024–2025) within the project Open Yourself for Career Skills and implemented by the Public Governance Innovation Lab at Mykolas Romeris University. The study draws on empirical data from non-formal career counselling contexts and provides a clear developmental picture of how career exploration unfolds across age groups.

Young people under 16

For younger adolescents, the study shows that career ideas are most often shaped by immediate interests and simplified associations. Statements such as "I like animals, so I will be a vet" typically reflect genuine curiosity and early self-awareness. However, they are rarely accompanied by an understanding of prerequisite education pathways, skill requirements, or the everyday realities of work in the field. At this stage, career exploration tends to focus on visible outcomes rather than on processes, working conditions, or long-term development.

The findings indicate that exploration among young people under 16 is largely passive and socially proximate. Career ideas are influenced primarily by family occupations, teacher suggestions, or media portrayals, rather than by systematic investigation of opportunities. As a result, many possible pathways remain invisible simply because young people have not encountered them in their immediate environment.

The study also shows that younger adolescents seldom clearly distinguish between hobbies and professions. Enjoyment of an activity is often equated with suitability as a career, without consideration of professional demands, daily routines, or labour market realities. In addition, young people in this age group rarely recognise how subject choices in lower secondary education can constrain or expand future options, as the consequences of these choices still feel distant and abstract.

Based on these findings, exploration for this age group should prioritise broadening awareness rather than evaluating or narrowing choices. Concrete encounters—such as meeting workers from diverse fields, hearing multiple career stories, or observing different workplaces—are significantly more effective than abstract descriptions or written information. Such encounters help young people expand their mental map of possible futures without forcing premature decisions.

Young people aged 16 and above

For older adolescents, the study reveals a different pattern. Young people aged 16 and above typically have access to a much wider range of information sources, including online career portals, university and vocational fairs, social media content, and informal peer networks. However, the research clearly shows that increased access does not automatically translate into meaningful understanding.

Many participants described feeling "informed but paralysed"—overwhelmed by the volume of available options and information, while lacking confidence in how to interpret or use that information to support action. Rather than enabling exploration, excessive information often intensified uncertainty and decision pressure.

The primary challenge for this group is therefore interpretation rather than access. The study highlights that young people struggle to assess the credibility of online sources, evaluate regional relevance, and understand how qualifications or study programmes translate into actual workplaces. They frequently encounter contradictory salary data, idealised job descriptions, or global career narratives that do not reflect local labour market realities.

Effective exploration for this age group requires structured scaffolding. The findings show that young people benefit from support that helps them move from passive information consumption to active evaluation. This includes learning to compare multiple sources, test assumptions through short job shadows or conversations with professionals, and verify digital information against official statistics or local data. When supported in this way, exploration becomes a process of sense-making rather than a source of overload.

Core competencies developed

Through guided career exploration, young people gradually develop opportunity scanning as an active and transferable habit. This competency refers to the ability to notice, question, and reflect on career possibilities as they appear in everyday environments, rather than relying exclusively on formal guidance moments or predefined lists of professions. Young people learn to observe where opportunities emerge in their local surroundings, who occupies different roles, and what visible or invisible conditions enable entry into specific fields. Over time, opportunity scanning shifts exploration from an occasional activity into an ongoing way of engaging with the world of work.

Exploration also significantly strengthens information triage skills, which are increasingly critical in information-rich and digitally mediated environments. Young people practice distinguishing between promotional or aspirational content and factual labour market data, recognising the difference between marketing narratives and evidence-based information. They learn to identify trustworthy sources, to question the relevance of global data for local contexts, and to notice when information is incomplete, outdated, or context-dependent. This ability to sort, prioritise, and critically assess information reduces the risk of both misinformation and paralysis caused by information overload.

In addition, guided exploration cultivates cognitive flexibility—the capacity to hold multiple possible pathways in mind without the need for immediate closure. Rather than feeling compelled to narrow options prematurely, young people learn to tolerate ambiguity and to treat uncertainty as a normal and informative part of exploration. Uncertainty is reframed as a prompt for further investigation, experimentation, or questioning, rather than as a signal of failure or inadequacy. In this way, curiosity itself becomes a core career competency, supporting learning, resilience, and adaptability over time.

Crucially, these competencies are distinct from self-knowledge or planning skills. While self-understanding focuses on internal patterns and planning focuses on sequencing steps toward a goal, exploration competencies operate at the interface between the individual and the external opportunity landscape. Their specific function is to prevent the premature elimination of options due to invisibility, unfamiliarity, or misinformation rather than genuine incompatibility. By strengthening opportunity scanning, information triage, and cognitive flexibility, exploration ensures that young people's choices are shaped by informed investigation rather than by limitation or assumption.

Key challenges and typical barriers

Barriers to career exploration differ across age groups, but they share a common structural dimension. Rather than reflecting a lack of interest or motivation among young people, these barriers emerge from how opportunities, information, and guidance are distributed and mediated within their environments.

For young people under 16, the dominant challenge is limited visibility. When exposure to the world of work is confined primarily to family occupations, local businesses, or a narrow set of socially visible roles, career options narrow prematurely. Young people may unconsciously equate familiarity with suitability, assuming that what they see represents the full range of possibilities. This often leads to simplified career narratives, such as believing that one visible profession stands for an entire sector or that a single educational route leads to all related jobs.

At this stage, limited visibility is reinforced by age-appropriate protection from complex labour market realities, which can unintentionally delay exposure to diversity in roles, working conditions, and pathways. Without deliberate intervention, exploration remains constrained by proximity rather than informed curiosity, and potentially relevant options are excluded before they are even considered.

For young people aged 16 and above, barriers shift from visibility to interpretation gaps. Digital career information is abundant and easily accessible, but its meaning is not self-evident. Young people often struggle to distinguish between freelance and salaried work, between short-term project-based roles and stable employment, or between local labour market demand and global trends presented online. Aspirational narratives—particularly those circulated through social media—can further distort understanding by highlighting exceptional success stories while obscuring everyday work realities.

In these contexts, exploration may appear active on the surface, while remaining superficial in practice. Young people consume large volumes of information without the tools to contextualise it, which can lead to confusion, indecision, or overestimation of certain pathways. Without support, interpretation gaps can be misread as indecisiveness rather than as a signal of unmet guidance needs.

Beyond age-specific challenges, structural barriers further constrain exploration. Fragmented guidance ecosystems mean that non-formal education settings often lack access to up-to-date labour market data or established links with employers and training providers. Rural youth encounter fewer opportunities for workplace exposure, site visits, or informal conversations with professionals, reinforcing geographical inequalities in exploration. Young people with fewer opportunities may face exploration tools and activities that implicitly assume access to digital devices, stable internet connections, or academically oriented pathways, thereby excluding or marginalising them.

Crucially, these barriers reflect systemic conditions rather than individual deficits. They cannot be addressed through increased pressure, motivation, or expectation placed on young people alone. Instead, effective responses require environmental adaptations: expanding exposure, scaffolding interpretation, diversifying narratives, and ensuring that exploration tools and methods are accessible, context-sensitive, and inclusive. Only under these conditions can exploration function as a genuine opportunity for informed choice rather than as a process constrained by structural limitation.

Implications for youth work practice

This section translates research insights into concrete guidance for youth workers supporting career exploration in non-formal settings. The emphasis is not on providing answers, but on shaping how exploration is approached, discussed, and experienced by young people.

What to emphasise in conversations

In conversations about career exploration, youth workers should consistently guide young people toward investigative questioning rather than definitive answers. The goal is not to help young people decide quickly, but to help them learn how to explore effectively.

Questions such as "What does a typical workday look like in this role?", "Who could we ask to learn more about this?", or "How could we check if this description matches reality?" shift exploration from passive information consumption to active inquiry. Over time, this approach helps young people understand that exploration is a skill-based process rather than a test of certainty or readiness.

Helpful questions

Helpful prompts differ by age and developmental stage. For younger adolescents, questions should focus on proximity and curiosity. Youth workers can encourage young people to notice what is already around them: who they know, what work they see in everyday life, and what sparks their interest. Questions such as "Who do you know who does interesting work?" or "What would you like to ask them?" help make exploration concrete and accessible.

For older youth, questions should emphasise verification, comparison, and contextual relevance. Prompts such as "How could you check whether this information applies to our region?" or "What sources could help you compare these two options?" support the development of interpretation skills and reduce reliance on single or idealised narratives.

What to avoid

Career exploration should not be framed as a linear step toward immediate decision-making. When exploration is presented as something that must quickly lead to a choice, it creates pressure and discourages curiosity. Young people may then focus on finding the "right answer" rather than on learning how to investigate options.

Conflating exploration with commitment undermines its open-ended purpose and can result in premature narrowing of possibilities. Youth workers should explicitly communicate that exploration is valuable even when it leads to uncertainty or to the rejection of an initially appealing option.

1–1 vs small-group facilitation

Both individual and small-group formats play an important role in supporting exploration.

Small groups of up to five participants are particularly effective for comparing information sources and challenging assumptions collaboratively. In these settings, young people can share what they have found, notice differences in interpretation, and collectively test ideas, such as contrasting online descriptions with lived experiences shared by peers.

Individual sessions are better suited for addressing emotional barriers related to exploration, especially when young people feel hesitant to explore unfamiliar, socially distant, or culturally unexpected fields. One-to-one conversations allow space to explore fears, doubts, or perceived limitations without social pressure.

Emotional safety and boundaries

A core task for youth workers is to normalise uncertainty and disappointment as part of exploration. It is essential to communicate that discovering a mismatch between expectations and reality—such as realising that a field is not appealing—is not a failure, but valuable information.

Framing these insights as learning outcomes helps young people maintain motivation and self-trust. Clear boundaries should be maintained: exploration is reflective and informational, not therapeutic, and young people should always retain the right to pause, change direction, or decline to pursue a particular line of inquiry.

Links to real-life contexts

Exploration becomes significantly more meaningful when it is connected to immediate, real-life environments. Analysing job advertisements in local shops, observing workplaces in the neighbourhood, or interviewing staff within familiar community spaces helps ground exploration in reality.

These connections reduce abstraction and allow young people to test assumptions against concrete examples. They also demonstrate that exploration does not only happen in special guidance sessions, but can be integrated into everyday life.

Micro-cases

Short, practice-based examples illustrate how exploration works in real contexts. A brief conversation with a professional, a short workplace visit, or the triangulation of online information with local data can significantly expand young people's mental models of work and opportunity.

Such micro-interventions show that exploration does not require extensive programmes to be effective. Even small, well-facilitated moments can shift how young people perceive possibilities and how confidently they approach the exploration process.

How non-formal learning and small-group counselling support exploring career opportunities

Non-formal learning environments uniquely support career exploration by enabling low-stakes experimentation that is rarely possible within formal education systems. In non-formal settings, young people are not expected to demonstrate mastery, make commitments, or produce "correct" answers. Instead, they are invited to test ideas, ask questions, and revise assumptions. This freedom reduces fear of failure and allows exploration to function as an open-ended learning process rather than a performance task.

Small-group counselling, typically involving three to five participants, plays a particularly important role in this process. In these groups, young people can collectively test assumptions, compare information from different sources, and observe how peers approach exploration. Hearing how others interpret the same information helps normalise uncertainty and demonstrates that confusion or contradiction is not a personal shortcoming but a shared experience. Over time, small-group dialogue supports the development of investigative strategies that young people can later apply independently.

Experiential methods further strengthen exploration by making abstract labour markets tangible. Analysing real job advertisements, examining training programme descriptions, conducting short interviews with professionals, or simulating information searches together allows young people to move from theory to practice. These activities help bridge the gap between general career narratives and concrete, lived realities of work, making exploration more meaningful and easier to sustain.

From an inclusion perspective, non-formal settings offer flexibility that is essential for equitable exploration. Mixed-ability small groups enable peer support, particularly in digital exploration tasks where levels of confidence and access vary. Young people with stronger digital literacy can support others in navigating online platforms, interpreting information, or verifying sources. This peer-supported model transforms exploration from an individual burden into a collaborative sense-making process.

Crucially, the non-formal context decouples exploration from grading, credentialing, or formal assessment. Without the risk of being evaluated or ranked, young people are more willing to express uncertainty, change their minds, or abandon an initially appealing option. This absence of punitive consequences supports genuine curiosity and reduces defensive narrowing of choices. Exploration becomes a space where learning from mismatch is valued as much as confirming interest.

Together, non-formal learning and small-group counselling create conditions in which exploration can function as a sustainable practice rather than a one-off activity. By combining emotional safety, experiential methods, and collaborative inquiry, these settings support young people in developing the confidence and skills needed to engage with career opportunities in a complex and changing world.

Conclusion

Career exploration should not be understood as a short preparatory phase that precedes “real” career decisions. Rather, it is an ongoing practice of opportunity literacy—the ability to notice, question, interpret, and test possibilities within dynamic and often uncertain labour markets. Its primary value lies not in accelerating decisions, but in expanding the range of options that young people are genuinely able to consider before committing to any particular pathway.

When exploration is facilitated as an investigative process, uncertainty becomes a productive condition rather than a problem to be solved. Young people learn that encountering contradictions, changing their minds, or ruling out an option after closer examination are all legitimate and valuable outcomes of exploration. In this sense, exploration strengthens resilience and adaptability by normalising learning through inquiry rather than through certainty.

For youth workers, this shifts the role from information provider to facilitator of investigative habits. The task is not to deliver answers or recommend “best” choices, but to support young people in asking better questions, verifying information across sources, and remaining open to unexpected or non-linear pathways. When these habits are cultivated, career exploration becomes a sustainable foundation for lifelong career adaptability—one that reduces pressure, counters confusion, and empowers young people to navigate future transitions with confidence and agency.

References

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2. Practical activities

This section presents a set of practical, small-group methods designed to support young people in actively exploring career opportunities through investigation rather than immediate decision-making. The activities guide participants in observing real labour-market contexts, questioning career information, and discovering how opportunities emerge within their local environment. Through structured inquiry, peer dialogue, and interaction with real-world examples such as job advertisements, workplace roles, and information sources, young people learn how to move from curiosity to informed exploration.

The methods emphasise experiential learning and investigative thinking. Instead of asking participants to choose careers, the activities help them develop the skills needed to locate, interpret, and verify career-related information. By analysing local labour-market realities, comparing sources, mapping opportunities, and formulating investigative questions, young people strengthen opportunity awareness, information literacy, and cognitive flexibility. In this way, exploration becomes an ongoing learning practice that supports informed career development and long-term adaptability in a changing world of work.



ACTIVITY NO. 1

Local Labour Market Detective

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 50 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify real occupations and workplaces within their local community.
- To strengthen participants' ability to generate investigative questions about unfamiliar roles.
- To increase awareness of how local economic, social, and technological changes create different career opportunities.
- To encourage young people to observe the labour market as something concrete, visible, and connected to their everyday environment.

Competences and skills developed

- Opportunity scanning
- Information literacy
- Critical questioning
- Contextual thinking
- Career exploration skills

Materials needed

- Local job advertisements from print or digital sources
- Large map of the local area or community
- Markers
- Sticky notes
- Optional: worksheet for recording observations

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the role of a local labour market detective

The facilitator explains that career exploration does not begin only with big dreams or distant professions. It also begins by learning to notice what kinds of work already exist in the local environment. Participants are invited to act as "local labour market detectives" and investigate what jobs are visible in their own community.

03

Map the workplaces

Groups place each job advertisement on a large local map using sticky notes. For each job, they note basic information such as the type of workplace, the sector, any required qualifications or skills, and one detail that surprised them. This helps participants connect occupations to real places in their area.

05

Formulate investigative questions

Groups create at least two questions per advertisement to uncover the role's true nature. These should move beyond titles to explore daily realities. Examples: "What is a typical day like?", "Which skills are used most?", "Who succeeds here?", "How has the role evolved lately?"

07

Connect jobs to community change

The discussion concludes with a broader question: which of these jobs seem connected to changes happening in the community, such as digitalisation, environmental transition, migration, changing services, or new technologies? This helps participants connect local occupations to wider trends.

02

Collect real local job advertisements

In small groups of up to five participants, young people collect three or four real job advertisements from local sources. These may come from shop windows, community notice boards, municipal websites, local social media groups, online job portals, or printed newspapers. The goal is to work with real and current examples rather than invented ones.

04

Observe patterns and differences

Participants look for similarities and differences across the advertisements. They may notice, for example, that some sectors ask for digital skills, some value communication, and others require practical experience or vocational training. The facilitator encourages them to focus on what the advertisements reveal about the local world of work.

06

Share findings with the group

Each group presents one or two job advertisements, explains what they noticed, and shares their investigative questions. The facilitator supports comparison between groups and highlights what different advertisements reveal about the local labour market.

08

Reflection

Participants reflect on what they learned from looking at real local opportunities instead of abstract career ideas.

Facilitator notes

- Keep the activity focused on observation and investigation rather than personal career matching.
- Avoid asking participants whether they personally want the job. Instead, ask what they would still need to verify in order to understand the role properly.
- Support participants in moving beyond the surface of job titles and noticing what advertisements reveal about skills, expectations, and labour market change.
- Where possible, include a range of sectors rather than only highly visible or prestigious roles.
- Encourage careful reading of job advertisements, including small details that may reveal workplace realities.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify several real occupations in their local community.
- Participants formulate concrete investigative questions about unfamiliar roles.
- Participants increase their awareness of how local labour-market changes create different career opportunities.
- Participants begin to understand career exploration as an active process of observing, questioning, and verifying.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Prioritise accessible local examples that do not assume expensive mobility or relocation.
- Include vocational and practical pathways alongside academic ones.
- Use mixed-ability groups so that participants can support one another, especially in digital search tasks.
- Avoid presenting certain occupations as more valuable than others.
- Be attentive to participants whose local environments may offer more limited visible opportunities, and support discussion about hidden or less obvious roles in the community.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which job description contained the most surprising detail?
- What question would help me test an assumption I had about this role?
- What did I notice about the kinds of jobs that exist in my local area?
- How does looking at real job advertisements change the way I think about career opportunities?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants move beyond stereotypical assumptions about certain jobs or sectors?
- Were participants able to generate specific and useful investigative questions?
- Did the activity help young people focus on external exploration rather than immediate self-matching?
- How could this method be adapted for communities with fewer visible local job opportunities?



ACTIVITY NO. 2

Skill Swap Market

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify transferable skills through peer interaction and shared experiences.
- To increase awareness that many skills can be applied across different professions and work environments.
- To encourage participants to recognise learning opportunities within their peer group.
- To develop curiosity about how skills function in real workplaces rather than focusing only on job titles.

Competences and skills developed

- Communication
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Opportunity awareness
- Critical thinking
- Recognition of transferable skills

Materials needed

- Flipchart paper or large wall space
- Markers
- Sticky notes
- Pens

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the idea of transferable skills

The facilitator briefly explains that many skills can be used in different professions and everyday situations. These are called transferable skills because they “travel” across different contexts such as school, volunteering, work, hobbies, or family responsibilities.

02

Identify personal skills and learning interests

Participants individually write down three or four skills they feel they can offer to others. Examples might include organisation, teamwork, digital skills, communication, creativity, problem-solving, or helping others learn. They also write two or three skills they would like to learn or improve.

03

Create the Skill Market wall

The facilitator prepares two sections on a wall or flipchart:

- “Skills I Can Offer”
- “Skills I Want to Learn”

Participants place their sticky notes in the appropriate sections.

04

Explore possible skill exchanges

Participants move around the room and read the notes placed by others. They look for connections between the skills people offer and the skills others want to learn. Participants then talk to one another to discuss how they could exchange knowledge, experiences, or tips related to these skills.

05

Form small discussion groups

Participants form small groups of three to five people and briefly discuss what they discovered during the activity. They reflect on how the same skill can appear in different contexts—for example, teamwork in sports, collaboration in a workplace, or coordination in community projects.

06

Share insights with the group

Each group shares one example of how a skill might function differently in different environments. The facilitator highlights how skills transfer across roles, sectors, and life experiences.

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on how recognising transferable skills can help them explore opportunities and adapt to different work situations.

Facilitator notes

- Reinforce that all skills have equal value, including practical, interpersonal, and informal skills.
- Avoid framing the activity as "selling yourself." Emphasise curiosity about how skills function in real workplaces and everyday situations.
- Encourage participants to recognise that skills can develop through school, hobbies, volunteering, family responsibilities, or community activities.

Expected outcomes

- Participants recognise strengths and skills they already possess.
- Participants understand that skills can transfer across different work environments.
- Participants learn from peers and become more confident discussing skills and abilities.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Encourage recognition of informal skills such as helping family members, volunteering, or community involvement.
- Use small groups to build trust and encourage participation.
- Avoid competitiveness or comparison between participants.
- Provide visual examples or explanations if participants struggle to identify skills.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which skill did you realise you already have?
- Which skill would you like to learn from someone else?
- How might this skill look different in a shop compared with an office?

Reflection questions for facilitators/youth workers

- Did all participants feel their skills were valued equally?
- How did group dynamics influence confidence and participation?



ACTIVITY NO. 3

Information Source Triangulation

Target group: ☑ 16+

Duration: 55 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants critically compare career information from different sources.
- To develop the habit of verifying information before accepting claims about jobs or careers.
- To strengthen participants' ability to recognise bias, promotion, and incomplete information in digital career content.
- To encourage thoughtful and responsible use of online career information.

Competences and skills developed

- Information triage
- Critical verification
- Source literacy
- Analytical thinking

Materials needed

- Three contrasting sources describing the same occupation (e.g., influencer video excerpt, official statistics portal excerpt, job platform description)
- Verification worksheet
- Paper and pens

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the idea of information verification

The facilitator explains that career information online can come from many sources, and these sources may present the same profession in different ways. Participants are told that their task is to analyse and compare information rather than decide which source is correct.

03

Analyse each source

Using the verification worksheet, groups analyse each source by answering guiding questions such as: Who created this information? What might the author gain from presenting the information in this way? What type of evidence or data is provided? What information might be missing?

05

Discuss verification strategies

The facilitator guides a short discussion by asking: "How could we check which information reflects local reality?" Participants suggest possible verification strategies.

07

Reflection

Participants briefly reflect on what the activity reveals about the importance of checking career information.

02

Distribute information sources

Participants work in small groups of up to five people. Each group receives three different sources describing the same occupation. The sources should vary in style and purpose, for example promotional content, statistical data, or general job descriptions.

04

Identify contradictions and differences

Groups compare the three sources and identify differences or contradictions between them. They discuss why the same occupation might be described differently depending on the source.

06

Plan verification actions

Each group writes down two concrete actions that could help verify the information. Examples might include checking official labour market statistics, comparing several job advertisements, or asking someone who works in the profession locally.

Facilitator notes

- Prepare the materials carefully before the session. Sources should contain realistic differences without being obviously misleading.
- Do not present the activity as identifying a "correct" source. The goal is to develop verification habits rather than to judge information immediately.
- Encourage participants to observe how different sources emphasise different aspects of a profession.
- Emphasise that verifying information is an ongoing process rather than a single check.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify indicators that help evaluate the credibility of information sources.
- Participants recognise that different sources may present the same profession in different ways.
- Participants propose practical steps for verifying career information.
- Participants develop a healthy and balanced scepticism toward single information sources.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Include examples reflecting both vocational and academic career pathways.
- Acknowledge that some young people may have limited access to digital devices or internet data.
- Encourage low-tech verification strategies such as asking local employers or community members.
- Avoid framing digital literacy challenges as personal shortcomings.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which source felt most convincing at first?
- What made you start questioning that source?
- What would help you feel more confident about career information you find online?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants recognise differences between promotional and informational sources?
- Did the activity encourage healthy questioning without discouraging curiosity?
- How effectively did participants propose realistic verification strategies?



ACTIVITY NO. 4

Career Concepts and Changing Work

Target Group: ☑ 16+

Duration: 50 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants understand that career paths are becoming more diverse and non-linear.
- To increase awareness of how labour market trends shape career opportunities.
- To develop the ability to generate investigative questions about emerging sectors and changing work environments.
- To encourage a flexible and realistic understanding of career development.

Competences and skills developed

- Opportunity awareness
- Critical thinking
- Adaptability
- Investigative questioning
- Labour market literacy

Materials needed

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Markers
- Career concept cards (Traditional, Portfolio, Boundaryless, Flexible)
- Labour market trend examples relevant to local context

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce different career concepts

The facilitator presents four career concepts using simple and concrete examples: Traditional career (one profession, stable path); Portfolio career (combining multiple roles or activities); Boundaryless career (moving across organisations or sectors); Flexible career (adapting to changing conditions, roles, or formats). Each concept should be explained through relatable examples rather than abstract definitions.

02

Present labour market trends

The facilitator introduces several current labour market trends relevant to the local context (for example: growth in renewable energy, increasing digitalisation, remote work, service transformation). The aim is to show that careers develop within changing environments.

03

Group task: connect concepts and trends

Participants work in small groups of up to five people. Each group receives one career concept and one labour market trend. Their task is to explore how these two elements might connect.

04

Generate investigative questions

Groups brainstorm questions that would help someone explore opportunities within this context. The focus is on investigation, not decision-making. Examples include: Who employs people in this sector locally? What skills are needed to enter this field? How is this work changing over time? What training or pathways exist in our region?

05

Share and compare questions

Groups present their questions to the whole group. The facilitator highlights differences and similarities, showing how various concepts and trends create different types of opportunities.

06

Discuss changing opportunity landscapes

The facilitator leads a short discussion on how career paths are becoming more diverse and how external factors such as technology, environment, and economy shape opportunities.

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on how their understanding of careers has changed through the activity.

Facilitator notes

- Keep the focus on exploration and questioning rather than personal choice.
- Avoid asking participants which career concept fits them personally.
- Frame trends as contexts to investigate, not predictions about the future.
- Use clear, locally relevant examples to support understanding.
- Rely on verified data sources when presenting labour market trends.

Expected outcomes

- Participants understand that career paths are becoming more diverse and non-linear.
- Participants generate concrete investigative questions about emerging sectors.
- Participants connect global and local trends with real career opportunities.
- Participants develop a more flexible and realistic understanding of career development.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Balance global examples with opportunities that are accessible locally.
- Highlight vocational and practical pathways alongside academic routes.
- Avoid presenting career change as requiring expensive or complex retraining.
- Support participants who may have limited exposure to emerging sectors with clear and simple explanations.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which career concept challenged your previous understanding of a "normal" career?
- Which labour market trend felt most relevant to your environment?
- What question would help you investigate whether this trend creates real opportunities in your region?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants engage with trends as opportunities to explore rather than fixed futures?
- Were participants able to generate meaningful investigative questions?
- How did I ensure that no career concept was presented as better or more desirable than others?



ACTIVITY NO. 5

Job Shadows Map

Target group: ☑ 16+

Duration: 60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants explore and visualise real workplaces and career pathways within their local environment.
- To strengthen the ability to identify concrete opportunities for career exploration and information gathering.
- To develop awareness of how to access real people, organisations, and environments as sources of career knowledge.
- To encourage participants to approach career exploration as an active investigation process.

Competences and skills developed

- Information literacy
- Opportunity awareness
- Planning skills
- Investigative thinking

Materials needed

- Large paper or digital whiteboard
- Coloured pens or markers
- Internet access (optional)
- Sample job profiles (optional)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the mapping concept

The facilitator explains that participants will create a visual “map” of workplaces, organisations, and people they could approach to learn more about different professions. Emphasise that the goal is not to choose a career, but to identify opportunities for exploration.

02

Brainstorm local contacts and workplaces

In small groups (up to five participants), young people brainstorm workplaces, organisations, or people they already know. This may include family members, local businesses, NGOs, schools, public institutions, or community services.

03

Create the job shadow map

Groups place their ideas on a large paper or board, visually mapping connections between workplaces, sectors, and possible contacts. They can use arrows, categories, or symbols to organise the information.

04

Expand using additional sources

If possible, groups use online tools (such as EURES, national employment portals, or local websites) to identify additional workplaces or sectors they were not initially aware of. These are added to the map as potential exploration points.

05

Identify investigative opportunities

For selected workplaces or roles, groups define who they could contact and what they would want to ask. They formulate simple investigative questions that could be used during a job shadow, visit, or conversation.

06

Present and compare maps

Each group presents their map, highlighting key workplaces, potential contacts, and examples of investigative questions. The facilitator supports comparison across groups to show the diversity of local opportunities.

07

Identify opportunities and barriers

The group briefly discusses what makes it easy or difficult to access these opportunities. This may include factors such as location, connections, information availability, or confidence in approaching people.

08

Reflection

Participants reflect on how mapping real environments changes their understanding of career exploration.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise curiosity, respect, and openness when discussing real workplaces and contacts.
- Frame contacts as sources for testing assumptions and learning about real work situations, not as validation of career choices.
- Encourage participants to think about how to approach people respectfully and realistically.
- Support participants in recognising both visible and less obvious workplaces in their environment.

Expected outcomes

- Participants build awareness of real workplaces and opportunities within their local context.
- Participants understand how to access career information through people and organisations.
- Participants develop the ability to formulate concrete investigative questions.
- Participants gain a more practical understanding of how career exploration can happen in real life.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

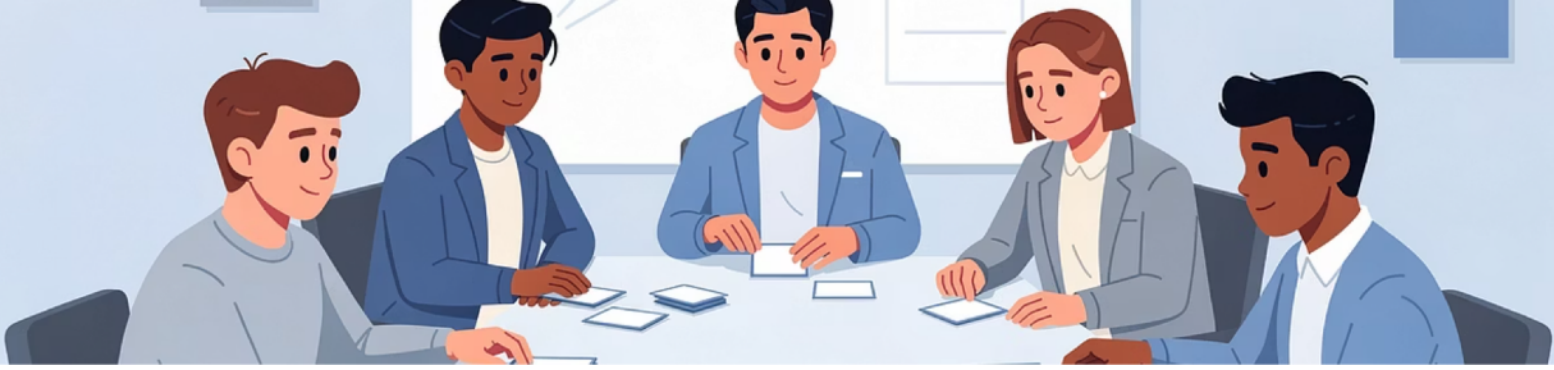
- Prioritise community-based and accessible examples that do not require significant financial resources.
- Include low-cost opportunities such as short visits, informal conversations, or local events.
- Acknowledge differences between rural and urban access to workplaces and adapt examples accordingly.
- Where possible, connect with inclusive local employers or organisations that are open to engagement with young people.

Reflection questions for participants

- What new workplaces or professions did you discover in your local area?
- Which contact or place would be easiest for you to explore further?
- What question would help you verify whether a job description matches real daily work?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants identify realistic and accessible opportunities for exploration?
- Did the activity help participants move from abstract ideas to concrete actions?
- How could partnerships with local organisations or employers be strengthened to support future exploration activities?



ACTIVITY NO. 6

Reality Check: Sorting Career Myths

Target group: ☒ Under 16

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants recognise and question common misconceptions related to careers, education, and success.
- To develop critical thinking when encountering information about jobs and career pathways.
- To increase awareness of how stereotypes and misinformation influence career perceptions.
- To encourage participants to verify information before accepting it as true.

Competences and skills developed

- Critical thinking
- Digital literacy
- Media literacy
- Communication skills

Materials needed

- "Career Myth" cards or slides (e.g., "Only university graduates get good jobs," "Boys are better at science")
- Two posters or areas labelled TRUE and FALSE

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the concept of career myths

The facilitator explains that many beliefs about careers are based on stereotypes, outdated information, or incomplete understanding. Participants are invited to explore which statements are accurate and which may be misleading.

03

Positioning activity

Participants move to the “TRUE” or “FALSE” side of the room depending on their opinion. If space is limited, they can raise hands or use cards.

05

Clarify with factual information

The facilitator provides clear and simple explanations using reliable data (for example, EURES or national career guidance sources) to confirm, challenge, or nuance the statement.

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on what they learned about questioning information and recognising myths.

02

Present myth statements

The facilitator reads or displays one statement at a time related to careers, education, or success.

04

Facilitate short discussions

After each statement, the facilitator invites participants to explain their choices. Questions such as “Why do you think this is true?” or “What makes you doubt this?” help encourage reasoning. Participants may share examples or experiences.

06

Highlight the impact of misinformation

The group briefly discusses how incorrect assumptions or stereotypes can influence career choices, confidence, and opportunities.

Facilitator notes

- Maintain a positive and exploratory tone throughout the activity.
- Avoid presenting participants' answers as right or wrong immediately—allow space for discussion first.
- Be attentive to sensitive topics and ensure that no participant feels targeted or judged.
- Use clear and simple explanations when correcting misconceptions.

Expected outcomes

- Participants learn to question common stereotypes and assumptions about careers.
- Participants develop greater awareness of how misinformation can influence decisions.
- Participants improve their ability to think critically about career-related information.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Avoid assumptions about participants' backgrounds, access to education, or opportunities.
- Include a variety of myths that reflect different social realities and experiences.
- Ensure that examples do not reinforce exclusion or negative stereotypes.
- Support participants in expressing their opinions in a safe and respectful environment.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which myth surprised you the most?
- Did any of your opinions change during the activity?
- How can you check if information about jobs or education is reliable?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- How did participants respond to challenging common stereotypes?
- Which myths created the most discussion or disagreement?
- What additional resources could support participants in verifying career information?
- Which misconceptions appear most common in your local context?



ACTIVITY NO. 7

My Employability Backpack

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 50–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify and describe personal assets that contribute to employability and future development.
- To increase awareness of skills, experiences, and support systems that individuals already possess.
- To encourage reflection on personal growth and future development needs.
- To support participants in identifying small and realistic next steps for strengthening their employability.

Competences and skills developed

- Self-efficacy
- Goal setting
- Adaptability
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Self-presentation

Materials needed

- Paper templates shaped like backpacks or blank paper
- Markers or pens
- Stickers (optional)
- Digital templates (optional)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the “employability backpack” concept

The facilitator explains that each person carries a set of skills, experiences, values, and support systems that help them move forward in life and work. These elements together form their “employability backpack.”

03

Fill the backpack

Participants fill each section with words, symbols, or drawings that represent what they already “carry.” These can include school experiences, hobbies, volunteering, personal strengths, people who support them, or things they have learned.

05

Reflect on weight and balance

The facilitator introduces the idea that some elements can “support” (lighten) or “challenge” (weigh down) a person’s path. Participants reflect on what helps them move forward and what might create difficulties.

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on what they discovered about themselves and their development.

02

Create the backpack structure

Participants draw a backpack or use a prepared template. Different sections represent key elements such as skills, experiences, values, supporters, and goals.

04

Pair sharing

Participants work in pairs and briefly share what they included in their backpack. They also discuss what they would like to “add” in the future, such as new skills, experiences, or connections.

06

Define a next step

Each participant identifies one realistic action they could take in the next month to strengthen their backpack. This may include learning a new skill, gaining experience, or reaching out to someone.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise progress and self-recognition rather than comparison.
- Reinforce that every participant's backpack is different and equally valuable.
- Connect the activity to the idea of lifelong learning and continuous development.
- Support participants who struggle by providing examples of skills and experiences.

Expected outcomes

- Participants recognise their existing skills, experiences, and strengths.
- Participants gain confidence in their ability to grow and develop.
- Participants identify realistic next steps for personal and career development.
- Participants understand employability as a combination of different personal assets.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Use visual or tactile materials to support engagement.
- Acknowledge informal experiences such as family responsibilities, migration, or volunteering as valuable strengths.
- Avoid focusing only on formal education or achievements.
- Support participants in recognising their own value and potential.

Reflection questions for participants

- What are the strongest skills or experiences in your backpack?
- What support systems help you move forward?
- What would you like to add to be better prepared for your next step?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants recognise informal experiences as valuable?
- How could you follow up to support participants in achieving their next steps?
- What partnerships (e.g., volunteering, internships, local organisations) could help participants expand their opportunities?

3. Digital Tip

This section presents several digital activities that use artificial intelligence as a structured support tool for expanding career exploration beyond immediate experience and improving the quality of career-related information use. Instead of focusing on career choice or decision-making, the activities help young people recognise how their understanding of careers is shaped, limited, and sometimes distorted by social proximity and digital information environments. By working with unfamiliar roles, contrasting information sources, and real-world preparation scenarios, participants learn to question what they know, how they know it, and what may be missing.

Using AI as a background facilitation tool allows youth workers to create realistic, context-sensitive examples that make invisible aspects of the labour market more accessible and understandable. The activities prioritise investigation over answers, helping young people develop habits of questioning, comparing, and verifying information. Through guided observation, critical analysis, and preparation for real-life encounters, participants strengthen their ability to engage with career opportunities more actively, realistically, and independently in a complex and rapidly changing world of work.



DIGITAL ACTIVITY NO. 1

Beyond What I Know: Mapping Hidden Career Landscapes

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

This digital activity supports young people in recognising how their understanding of careers is shaped by social proximity, such as family occupations, local environments, and familiar community roles. Using AI as a preparatory tool, the activity introduces alternative and less visible career examples connected to familiar interests, helping participants expand their awareness beyond what they already know. Instead of presenting new careers as "better" options, the activity focuses on uncovering hidden diversity within the world of work.

Through guided discussion and hypothesis-building, participants explore unfamiliar roles by analysing job descriptions and reflecting on their assumptions about daily tasks and required skills. AI functions as a background support tool for the facilitator, helping generate relevant and context-sensitive examples. The activity encourages curiosity, critical thinking, and openness, while reinforcing that career exploration begins with questioning what is visible and what remains unseen.

Learning objectives

- To recognise how social proximity shapes and limits career awareness.
- To generate curiosity about unfamiliar occupations connected to familiar interests.
- To develop the ability to question assumptions about jobs and work.

Competences and skills developed

- Opportunity scanning
- Cognitive flexibility
- Critical thinking
- Questioning assumptions

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or large paper
- Markers
- Printed local job advertisements from diverse sectors

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the activity

The facilitator asks participants to name three jobs they know well and writes all responses on the board.

02

Make social proximity visible

The facilitator briefly highlights that most listed jobs are likely connected to family members, friends, or commonly visible roles in the local environment.

03

Introduce unfamiliar roles

Participants are divided into small groups (up to five participants) and each group receives one job advertisement representing a less familiar or less visible occupation.

04

Explore assumptions

Groups discuss what they think the job involves by answering questions such as: What does a typical workday look like? What tasks might this person do? What skills might be required?

05

Share and compare

Each group presents their ideas. The facilitator supports comparison between assumptions and the actual job description, highlighting differences and patterns.

06

Reflect on visibility

The group reflects on why some jobs are more visible than others and how this influences career awareness.

AI prompt example



I am a youth worker in [country/region]. Young people here mainly know jobs from family or close social circles, such as teachers, shop assistants, or construction workers. Generate 8 diverse occupation examples that connect to these familiar roles but expand awareness. For each example, include a short and concrete description of daily tasks. Focus on realistic roles and avoid stereotypes.

Facilitator notes

- Use AI before the session to prepare relevant occupation examples adapted to the local context.
- Do not present AI-generated content as direct suggestions to participants.
- Integrate examples naturally into discussion to challenge limited visibility.
- Emphasise that participants are testing assumptions, not searching for correct answers.
- Maintain a neutral tone and avoid presenting unfamiliar careers as more valuable.

Expected outcomes

- Participants recognise that their career awareness is influenced by social proximity.
- Participants express curiosity about unfamiliar occupations.
- Participants formulate initial questions for further exploration.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Avoid presenting careers that require inaccessible or highly resource-intensive pathways without alternatives.
- Include occupations with multiple entry routes, including vocational and community-based pathways.
- Use examples grounded in local labour market realities.
- Support understanding through discussion rather than relying on written materials only.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which occupation surprised me the most and why?
- What assumptions did I make about certain jobs?
- What would I like to find out more about this role?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did the activity help participants recognise limitations in their career awareness?
- Were unfamiliar roles introduced without creating pressure or hierarchy?
- How effectively did I support participants in questioning their assumptions?



DIGITAL ACTIVITY NO. 2

Source Detective: Testing Career Information Quality

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 50–70 minutes

This digital activity supports young people in developing critical awareness when navigating large amounts of career-related information in digital environments. Participants work with multiple sources describing the same occupation and learn to identify differences in perspective, intention, and credibility. The activity focuses on understanding that not all information is neutral, and that career-related content often includes promotional, simplified, or context-dependent elements.

Through structured comparison and guided questioning, participants analyse how information is created, what purposes it serves, and how it may differ from real labour market conditions. AI is used by the facilitator as a preparation tool to create realistic but nuanced contradictions between sources. The activity encourages verification habits, helping young people move from passive consumption of information to active evaluation and informed interpretation.

Learning objectives

- To distinguish between promotional content and factual labour market information.
- To develop habits of comparing and verifying information across multiple sources.
- To strengthen critical thinking when interpreting career-related content.

Competences and skills developed

- Information triage
- Critical verification
- Source literacy
- Analytical thinking

Materials needed

- Three contrasting sources about the same occupation (e.g., influencer video excerpt, official statistics portal excerpt, job platform description)
- Worksheets with verification prompts

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the activity

The facilitator explains that career information online often comes from different sources with different purposes, and that not all information reflects reality equally.

02

Distribute sources

Participants are divided into small groups (up to five participants). Each group receives three different sources describing the same occupation.

03

Analyse the sources

Using a worksheet, groups analyse each source by answering guiding questions such as: Who created this? What might they gain from it? What type of information is presented? What evidence is provided?

04

Identify contradictions

Groups compare the sources and identify differences or contradictions related to salary, required skills, daily tasks, or career pathways.

05

Discuss verification

The facilitator leads a discussion asking how participants could verify which information reflects local and realistic conditions.

06

Plan verification actions

Each group formulates two concrete actions they could take to verify the information (for example: speaking with a professional, checking official statistics, visiting a workplace).

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on how comparing sources changes their understanding of career information.

AI prompt example



I am preparing a career exploration session for 17-year-olds. Create a realistic scenario showing slightly contradictory information about [occupation]. Use three sources: (1) a social media influencer promoting a course, (2) a national employment statistics portal, and (3) a generic job platform. Include differences in salary expectations, required qualifications, and daily tasks. Ensure all sources appear realistic and none are obviously false.

Facilitator notes

- Use AI before the session to prepare realistic and subtle contradictions between sources.
- Do not present AI-generated materials as artificial or fabricated.
- Encourage participants to notice differences independently rather than pointing them out directly.
- Emphasise that verification is an ongoing process, not a one-time action.
- Maintain balance between critical thinking and curiosity—avoid creating distrust toward all information.

Expected outcomes

- Participants identify at least two indicators of source credibility.
- Participants recognise differences between information sources and their purposes.
- Participants propose realistic and concrete verification actions.
- Participants develop a balanced and critical approach to career information.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Include examples that reflect both vocational and academic career pathways.
- Acknowledge that not all participants have equal access to digital tools or internet resources.
- Highlight low-cost or offline verification methods (e.g., asking local employers or community members).
- Avoid framing lack of digital skills as a personal deficit; focus on developing practical strategies.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which source felt most convincing at first and why?
- What made you question the information?
- What would help you feel confident about career information in real life?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants engage in critical comparison without becoming overwhelmed?
- Was a balance maintained between scepticism and openness?
- How effectively did the activity support independent thinking and verification skills?



DIGITAL ACTIVITY NO. 3

Question Crafting Lab: From Curiosity to Conversation

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 40–50 minutes

This digital activity prepares young people for real-world career exploration encounters such as workplace visits, job shadowing, or conversations with professionals. Instead of focusing on general or advice-seeking questions, participants learn how to formulate specific and meaningful inquiries that reveal the everyday realities of work. The activity emphasises that understanding a profession comes from observing concrete details such as tasks, tools, challenges, and interactions rather than collecting opinions or recommendations.

Through structured practice, participants develop confidence in asking questions and engaging in real-life conversations. AI is used by the facilitator as a preparation tool to generate examples of clear, realistic, and non-intimidating questions. The activity supports a shift from passive observation to active investigation, helping young people approach workplace encounters with curiosity, clarity, and reduced anxiety.

Learning objectives

- To develop the ability to formulate specific and meaningful questions about work.
- To move beyond general or abstract questions toward concrete investigation of daily realities.
- To reduce anxiety related to real-world encounters with professionals.

Competences and skills developed

- Formulating investigative questions
- Active listening preparation
- Communication skills
- Confidence in real-world interactions

Materials needed

- Occupation cards with brief role descriptions
- Question prompt cards (e.g., "Ask about a typical workday," "Ask about a recent challenge")
- Flipchart or board

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the context

The facilitator explains the upcoming real-world encounter (e.g., workplace visit, job shadow, or interview) and its purpose as an opportunity to explore, not evaluate.

02

Distribute occupation cards

Participants are divided into small groups (up to five participants) and receive a role or occupation related to the upcoming visit.

03

Generate initial questions

Using prompt cards, groups create questions focused on concrete aspects of work, such as daily tasks, tools, work environment, or collaboration.

04

Refine questions

Groups share their questions. The facilitator supports refinement toward specificity, helping participants transform general questions into more precise ones.

05

Select personal questions

Each participant chooses two to three questions they feel comfortable asking during the real-world encounter.

06

Prepare for interaction

The facilitator briefly discusses how to ask questions respectfully and how to listen actively during responses.

07

Reflection

Participants reflect on how preparing questions changes their confidence and expectations for the encounter.

AI prompt example



I am a youth worker preparing young people for a visit to [workplace/sector]. Generate 10–12 specific, simple, and non-intimidating questions they could ask workers about daily work realities. Focus on concrete aspects such as tools used, tasks performed, collaboration, and challenges. Avoid questions about salary or how to enter the profession.

Facilitator notes

- Use AI before the session to prepare examples of clear and concrete questions.
- Do not allow AI to generate questions during the activity itself.
- Encourage participants to adapt questions to their own curiosity and communication style.
- Emphasise that the goal is to understand work realities, not to receive advice or validation.
- Reinforce that there are no "wrong" questions if they are respectful and relevant.

Expected outcomes

- Participants formulate two to three specific and meaningful questions.
- Participants feel more confident engaging in real-world conversations.
- Participants focus on observing and understanding work realities rather than seeking approval or direction.

Points of attention — youth with fewer opportunities

- Acknowledge possible power dynamics in workplace encounters.
- Prepare participants for situations where responses may be brief or limited.
- Include questions that reflect diverse entry pathways, not only academic routes.
- Ensure a supportive environment where all participants feel comfortable contributing.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which question feels most natural or important for you to ask?
- What kind of answers would help you understand the job better?
- How does preparing questions change how you feel about the visit?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants move from general to specific questions?
- Did the activity reduce anxiety about real-world interaction?
- How effectively did participants focus on investigation rather than validation?

Disclaimer:

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About the project „Open Yourself for Career Skills“

The project „Open Yourself for Career Skills“ aims to strengthen non-formal career counselling for young people by integrating digital tools and innovative non-formal education methods. It focuses on making career guidance more accessible, relevant, and tailored to the needs of youth. The project also seeks to improve digital literacy, equip youth workers with modern tools, and increase the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, thereby supporting young people's employability and active participation in society.

Objectives:

1. **Strengthen non-formal career counselling for youth.** Improve the quality and innovation of career services by applying non-formal methods adapted to the digital era and accessible to young people.
2. **Enhance digital inclusion.** Expand access to career counselling through a multilingual mobile application and online platform, increasing digital literacy and supporting inclusion and diversity.
3. **Promote innovation in youth work.** Introduce new career guidance approaches, including a methodological tool and training for youth workers, while strengthening the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes.
4. **Build youth worker capacity.** Deliver targeted training to improve competences in non-formal education and digital tools, enhancing the quality and recognition of youth work.
5. **Promote inclusion in career guidance.** Apply universal design principles to ensure accessibility of all project resources, supporting inclusion and diversity across learning contexts.
6. **Strengthen youth employability.** Improve understanding of skills and labour market dynamics, and develop soft skills through tailored career guidance, facilitating transition into employment.

Duration: 24 months (October 2024 – September 2026)

Partners and countries involved:

- Society and Enterprise Development Institute (Lithuania)
- Youth association “Time for Youth” (Latvia)
- Secondary school Haaleitisskoli, Reykjanesbaer (Iceland)
- Regional youth association “Amigos de Europa” (Spain)