

COST ACTION CA23112 -  
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON CAREER AND CAREER  
GUIDANCE (COCAG)

## WORKING GROUP 1 PRESENTATION

20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025

Mariana Lucas Casanova ([marianacasanova@ese.ipp.pt](mailto:marianacasanova@ese.ipp.pt))

## **(1) How can the challenges and changes that are happening to careers in the contemporary world be understood?**

### **Challenges and changes:**

- Aftermath of the 2008 crash
- COVID-19
- Wars
- Migration
- Technological transformation
- AI
- Climate crisis

...

**Continuities:** the increased precaritisation of the labour market (WG1), neoliberal policies (WG2) and individualised forms of CGC (WG3)

*“The main goal of COCAG is to critically examine careers and career guidance in the contemporary world in order to understand the complex relationship between individual psychology, technological changes, and the political economy.” (MoU, 2024, p. 2).*

## **Critical perspectives on career and career guidance**

WG1: *“explore how the shifts in the global political economy manifest through individuals’ experience of work and career, shaping aspirations and shifting the patterns and scripts that careers follow.” (MoU, 2024, p.8)*

Dialectics between the private and the political – to:

***“encourage utopian and counter-factual thinking about how work and career can be reimaged in more fulfilling and emancipatory ways.”***  
(MoU, 2024, p.8)

## **Sociohistorical and political conceptualisation of work and career – questioning:**

The concept of work (e.g., as a right, as a duty... as potentially fulfilling or as a burden)

Forms of work (e.g., real vs alienated)

Conditions of work (fair, precarious, exploitative, exploitative disguised as *flexible*)

The access to meaning through work (e.g., source of well-being, fulfilment; source of consumption and our consumer roles – pacify class struggles: the only way to achieve social status and access to consumerism and citizenship while not paying enough to ensure it)

Meaningful work (as having the potential to provide meaning for existence)

Decent work (century-long demand for the concretization of the promise of social-democracy – if we consider the establishment of the ILO)

...

## **Who benefits from all these conceptualisations, forms, conditions of work?**

## **Sociohistorical and political conceptualisation of work and career – questioning the individual experience of:**

Career development and self-determination (do they the have the power for it?)

Decision-making (level of personal agency within it)

Career adaptability (while socially and economically constrained)

Initiative and proactivity (while financially deprived; or while deprived of a sense of security and hope in the future)

Career Success (as an individualised experience of productivity based on competitiveness that depends on the existence of losers)

Social, economic, psychological, work problems – perceived as individual ones, atomising individuals, engendering distrust and undermining solidarity and collective agency (victim-blaming or self-blaming – feelings of inadequacy)

...

## **Who benefits from these conceptualisations of individuals' experiences?**

## **Sociohistorical and political conceptualisation of work and career – questioning policy making in education, VET and employment:**

Quality and inclusive education (for all?...)

The university (and VET): must adapt to the needs of the labour market

Erosion of work conditions

The (false?) promise of full employment

Deregulation (or Liberalisation) of the labour market (creating zero-hour contracts, part-time jobs, precarity and outsourcing – returning to the 19<sup>th</sup> century: temporary, sessional workers, leaving the company free from paying social insurance, holidays or providing training)

The Welfare state vs TINA - Austerity (reducing unemployment benefits, engendering greater precarity and instability, privatising pensions... created more inequality)

...

## **Who benefits from these policies?**

## **Sociohistorical and political conceptualisation of work and career – questioning the unintended impacts of career guidance and counselling**

Marketised LMI: standardisation of individual experiences, behaviours and desires (e.g., graduates in business aim to work in the Big Four...)

Focus on self-development, self-improvement – contributing to individualism, self-interest disregarding the socioeconomic and political origins of individual problems and pathologising individuals' experiences

Employability skills: essentialisation of the employable individual who must be produced to respond to the needs of the labour market - reinforcing the myth of meritocracy and contributing to the development of neoliberal forms of subjectivity

Simplification that rejects theory and critical reflection: “*all in career is marketing*” – “personality market” (Wright Mills, 1951)

Promoting entrepreneurial skills in times of unemployment (producing the highest form of individualism)

...

## **Who benefits from practices that seek individual solutions for social problems?**

Individualisation, individualism, competitiveness, distrust, uncertainty - by undermining individual and collective individuation, atomised workers and fragmented communities

This context has contributed to:

- Erosion of workers' rights, trade unions and collective bargaining and gradually welfare rights (Gorz, 1997/1999)
- Corrosion of ethical values and the potential for social justice - depoliticizing the economy and populations - to abolish politics (Méda, 1995/1999) - Disbelief in critical reflection and the potential of collective action (Arendt, 1958/2001)
- Dilution of political power engendered political discredit - “public power is obsolete” (Stiegler, 2004/2011; 2014) – violence, hatred, carelessness
- Tendency towards anti-egalitarian beliefs, pro-authoritarianism (Lucas Casanova et al., 2021)



*...when we lose the faculty to judge – to suffer and condemn – we begin to think that there is something wrong with us if we cannot live under the conditions of desert life. Insofar as psychology tries to “help” us, it helps us ‘adjust’ to those conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world. Psychology turns everything topsy-turvy: **precisely because we suffer under desert conditions we are still human and still intact; the danger lies in becoming true inhabitants of the desert and feeling at home in it.***

(Arendt, 2005, p. 201).

Producing the neoliberal productive worker

- Reproducing the *status quo* by promoting the adaptation of individuals to the labour market and this socioeconomic and political context
- Producing symbolic misery - subsistence / inability to give meaning to life and existence (Stiegler, 2004/2011)
- Dissatisfaction, alienation

Vs

**Challenging the commodification of work, individuals and vocational and career counselling – challenging the desert**

- Promoting critical reflection - “thinking theory as practice and practice as theory” (Stiegler, 2004/2011, p.99)
- Offer a political perspective of work and career development, committed to social justice – promote awareness of inequalities, oppression and exclusion
- Work: sub-sist (subsistence); ex-sist (existence) (Stiegler, 2004/2011)
- Construct a new future in solidarity

**Aim: to develop a network that may influence policymaking and CGC practice**

Until May 2025:

- First webinar: circa 110 attendants; 7 oral communications; presentation of proposal of topics based on information provided by members; debate
- Reformulation of topics and development of subgroups
- Organisation of 6 meetings for each subgroup – all with members and subgroup leaders appointed; dissemination of relevant opportunities
- Organisation of folders (WG 1 and each subgroup)

## Research subgroups

- The impact of the socioeconomic and political organisation of the labour market on the experience of work and on career development (e.g., unemployment, precarity, uncertainty): MLC
- The impact of Automation, digitalization, robotization, AI on the labour market, the experience of work and career development: LK
- The meaning and value of work, and the future of work and career development : LK
- Work and career development in relation to geographical space and place (e.g., experiences of work in specific places; environmental issues): RG
- Inclusion and social justice (the experiences of vulnerable groups – migration, people with disabilities...): MLC
- The experience of work and career in specific contexts (e.g., academic careers; educational careers; nursing;...): RG

- 1. The impact of the socioeconomic and political organisation of the labour market on the experience of work and on career**
  - Critiques of the contemporary organisation of the labour market and how it engenders inequality through the deregulation of work relations - E.g., Unemployment, underemployment and precarity; the impact of financial crises; geopolitical changes
  - Critical approaches to HRM: The psychosocial impact of Neoliberal Human Resources Management - e.g., the concept of souffrance, voluntary servitude, critical approaches to performance assessment, working conditions, etc.
  - ...

**Supervisor:** Mariana Lucas Casanova

**Subgroup leaders:**

1. Gulsel Ciftci - Trakya University ([gulsellciftci@gmail.com](mailto:gulsellciftci@gmail.com))
2. ?

## **2. The impact of Automation, digitalization, robotization, AI on the labour market, the experience of work and career development**

- Uberisation of work and careers (impact on wellbeing, career development, meaning of work...)
- Organisation of the labour market
- Unemployment
- ...

**Supervisor:** Limor Kessler Ladelsky

### **Subgroup leaders:**

1. ESRA DOGRU HUZMELI - ISTANBUL GEDIK UNIVERSITY  
([esradogru001@gmail.com](mailto:esradogru001@gmail.com))
2. Róbert Hanák - University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of Business Management, Department of Information Management, Bratislava, Slovakia ([robert.hanak@euba.sk](mailto:robert.hanak@euba.sk))

## 3. The meaning and value of work, and the future of work and career development

- Calls for Decent work
- The changing social value and psychological meaning of work in the contemporary world (includes impacts on work-life balance, well-being and mental health, collective purpose, fulfilment, critical consciousness, empowerment, socio-political participation...)
- Proposals for structural and collective changes for the reformulation of the labour market and the social organisation of work (e.g., the 4-day week)
- ...

**Supervisor:** Limor Kessler Ladelsky

**Subgroup leaders:**

1. Judit Vegh - ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Psychology ([juditvegh@gmail.com](mailto:juditvegh@gmail.com))
2. ?

## **4. Work and career development in relation to geographical space and place (e.g., experiences of work in specific places; environmental issues)**

- The impact of environmental changes and sustainability on the labour market and the experience of career
- The impact of natural disasters on the labour market and the experience of career
- Migration and the experience of work and career development
- Rurality/Spatial isolation and work
- ...

**Supervisor:** Ricky Gee

**Subgroup leaders:**

1. Rosie Alexander - Aarhus University ([rosiea@edu.au.dk](mailto:rosiea@edu.au.dk))
2. ?



## **5. Inclusion and social justice (the experiences of vulnerable groups – e.g., people with disabilities...)**

- Critical approaches to the role of Education and VET for inclusion and social justice among vulnerable groups (e.g., socioeconomic and political effects on learning and career development)
- Research on social groups that face added challenges in Labour market integration and career development: women, at-risk youth, elderly workers, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities...), addressing issues related to intersectionality, inequality and social exclusion
- ...

**Supervisor:** Mariana Lucas Casanova

**Subgroup leaders:**

1. Tanja Schroot - University of Turin ([tanja.schroot@unito.it](mailto:tanja.schroot@unito.it))
2. Louise Oldridge - Nottingham Trent University([louise.oldridge@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:louise.oldridge@ntu.ac.uk))

## **6. The experience of work and career in specific contexts (e.g., academic careers; educational careers; nursing;...)**

- Critique of the impact of neoliberalism on academia and research, undermining career development and wellbeing of researchers – e.g., proletarianisation of knowledge (Stiegler)
- Critique of the neoliberal devalue of educational and care focused professions (e.g., teachers, domestic workers, nurses, informal carers, etc.)
- ...

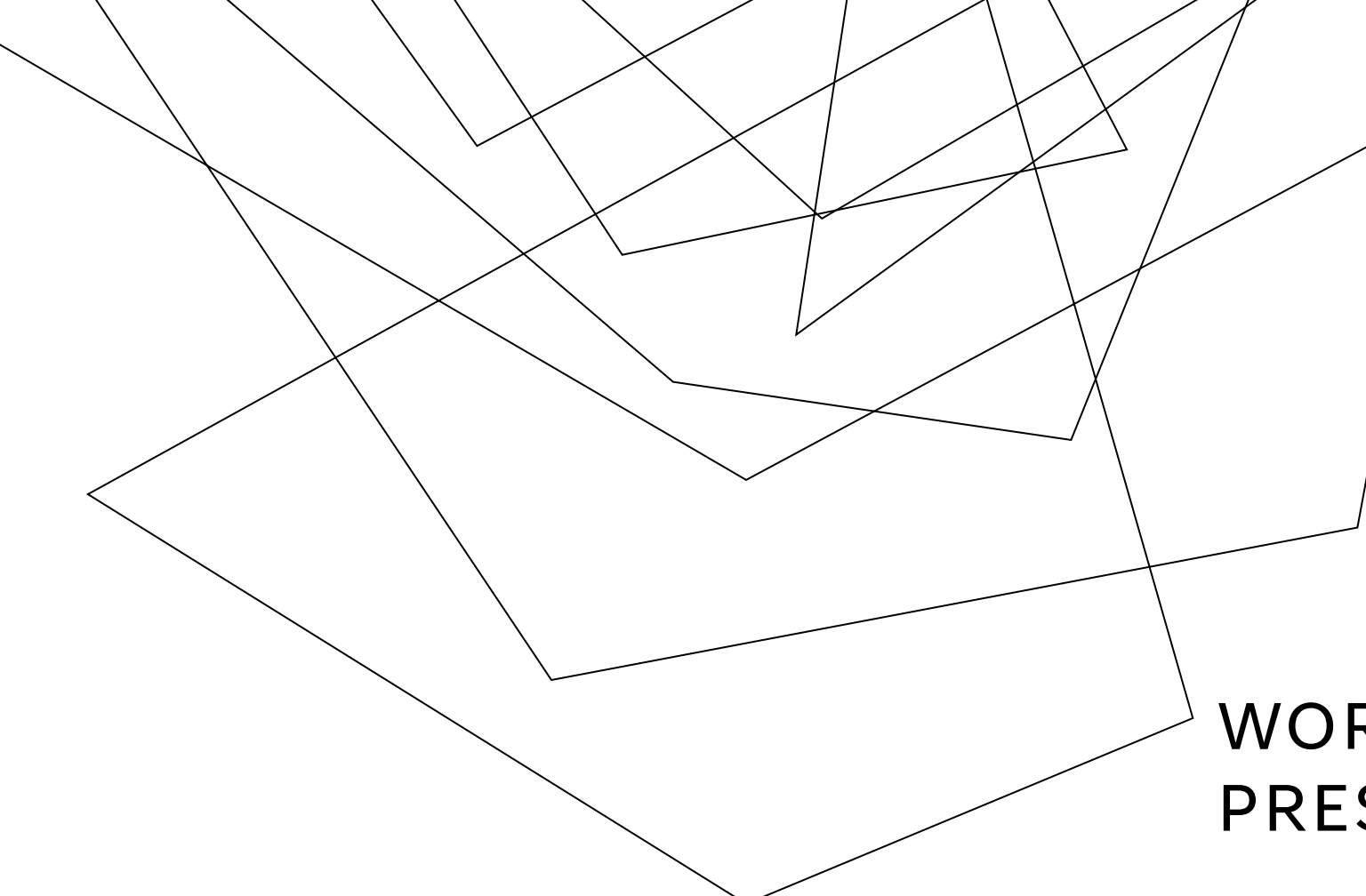
**Supervisor:** Ricky Gee

**Subgroup leaders:**

1. Melike Günbey (Giresun University): [melike.gunbey@giresun.edu.tr](mailto:melike.gunbey@giresun.edu.tr)
2. Sanja Petkovska (Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia): [sanjalicica@gmail.com](mailto:sanjalicica@gmail.com)

Start work towards the development of joint research – which may contribute to all other WG activities:

- Organise a second webinar during 2025
- Organise the WG1 conference during 2026
- Support the organization of the ECADOC Summer School 2026
- Development of a Research digest - highlight key issues and research in the field to stimulate the work of WG 2 and WG 3



COST ACTION CA23112 -  
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON CAREER AND CAREER  
GUIDANCE (COCAG)

## WORKING GROUP 1 PRESENTATION

20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025

Mariana Lucas Casanova ([marianacasanova@ese.ipp.pt](mailto:marianacasanova@ese.ipp.pt))