



**Bundesagentur für Arbeit**  
Zentrale Auslands-  
und Fachvermittlung (ZAV)



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## **Euroguidance Cross Border Seminar**

**Dresden, Germany, 23 - 24 May 2023**

*“Working as a guidance counsellor in a changing world –  
(do) we have what it takes?”*

### **Opening Speech**

*(Steffen Sottung – Geschäftsführer Internationales der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)/  
Managing Director International Affairs of the German Federal Employment Agency)*

Dear participants of the Euroguidance Cross Border Seminar 2023,  
Dear experts and guidance counsellors,

I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to your annual seminar. At the same time, I would like to express my apologies for not being able to be with you in Dresden.

Germany and especially the German Federal Employment Agency, which I represent today, are very proud to welcome you in Dresden in the framework of the European Year of Skills, which officially started a few days ago.

We are all facing significant disruptions in our respective labour and education markets.

The skills shortages are one of the biggest constraints on the European economy. Demographic change is a challenge for society as a whole.

To maintain Europe's prosperity and attractiveness today, is a joint responsibility of governments, education, training systems, public employment services, companies and workers to master the ongoing transition.

### **Strategic framework – Current challenges – Megatrends**

During the next two days in Dresden, you will discuss about your current role as career counsellors and give practical insights into your daily counselling work.

As counselling professionals today, you need to be able to deal with multiple challenges in order to provide good guidance to your clients every day.

How does the demographic, digital and ecological change affect your work as a counsellor? Are you prepared for these changes? What knowledge and competences do you need and how can you build them up?

Professor Weber from the University of the German Federal Employment Agency will certainly give you food for thought on the seminar topic with his key note and you will discuss these issues further by exchanging good guidance methods and approaches from 10 different countries in 15 very interesting thematic workshops during the two days.

To start with, let me briefly outline five central social and labour market policy challenges, that we are facing and of course all of us aware of:

- Technological possibilities and the orientation towards sustainable and environmentally friendly economic activity are changing production processes and economic procedures worldwide. These developments are also having an impact on global labour markets. New job profiles are emerging and existing ones are changing.
- In addition, digitalisation is increasingly changing also the work of career counsellors. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this process in recent years. For example, online counselling is now an integral part of communication with clients, and online portals and self-information services are being expanded.
- This means, that the qualification requirements on the labour market are also constantly evolving, so that lifelong learning is becoming or must become the norm for everyone. As career counsellors your job will be to foster a culture of learning and to show the good example.
- Demographic developments are challenging many countries in the European Union – and worldwide – to meet the growing demand for labour and skilled workers.
- Another major challenge for Europe at present and in the future is the increase in refugees caused by war and climate change. The integration of refugees and migrants into the labour market is crucial to enable these people to participate in economic and social life.

### **BA fields of action – Strategy 2025 – BA responses to the challenges**

It is important, that counselling organisations such as the German Federal Employment Agency keep in touch with their clients through good and up-to-date services.

We have to build up a relationship of trust and professionalism in order to support in overcoming different crisis. To achieve this, we want to offer the right services at the right moment in life.

Let me spend one minute to describe which services the BA is offering:

**Pre-employment career guidance** is to open the way for young people to training, study or employment. We want to achieve this by

- Expanding and establishing the offer of proactive career guidance and counselling for pupils at all schools also vocational schools and universities, by intensifying our online but also on-site counselling services. Vocational orientation should become a matter of course for pupils.
- Intensifying cooperation with network partners and relevant stakeholders in guidance to improve the impact of individual guidance. A good example here are the Youth Employment Agencies, which link guidance centres, youth welfare offices, job centres and employment agencies. Young people find their contact persons for different but related issues under one roof.
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- Strengthening the professional supervision of career guidance as well as the vocational, labour market and methodological training for guidance practitioners in order to ensure the quality of guidance. This conference today contributes to these competence developments.

**Vocational guidance in working life** is an offer for people who are already in working life and have reached a point in their employment biography where they have an urgent need for (re-)orientation.

In times of a shortage of skilled workers, our goal is to maintain the employability of this group of people in the best possible way. To do so:

- The BA expands its counselling services for people in employment with low qualifications, in the case of a new career or a change of career, for people about to re-enter the labour market and for graduates of vocational and higher education institutions.
- We create topic-specific vocational orientation events in modern, appealing formats.
- We adapt our counselling sessions and office hours in places where our clients are.

In order to be able to implement these goals successfully, new guidance approaches and methods are necessary. It is therefore all the more important to continuously train the counsellors and to give them a platform for exchange through networks – like Euroguidance – such as this Cross Border Seminar in Dresden.

### **Securing jobs and skilled workers**

Another central field of action for the German Federal Employment Agency is securing jobs and skilled labour. As we all know, future labour market needs cannot be met by domestic labour and skilled workers alone.

Therefore, the recruitment and integration of labour and skilled workers especially from third countries (keyword: Skilled Workers Immigration Act) – is a central field of action for the Federal Employment Agency.

As part of the Federal Government's National Skills Strategy, the Federal Employment Agency is increasingly promoting initial and continuing vocational education and training and aims to increase the labour force participation of women, the low-skilled, people with disabilities and the (re-)employment opportunities of older people.

Another potential for securing skilled labour for the domestic labour market is to better support foreign graduates from German universities when they wish to stay and find work in Germany.

### **Strengthen networking at national and international level**

We can overcome all the challenges in Europe if we succeed to build good cross-border cooperations.

For this reason, the German Federal Employment Agency has been deeply engaged for many years in networks and initiatives at European and international level (Euroguidance, EURES, PES-Network, WAPES).

The Euroguidance network is a very good example of how well European cooperation in the field of guidance works. It is important that guidance professionals have knowledge of the European education and labour markets.

With this Cross Border Seminar Euroguidance makes an important contribution to the competence development of counsellors at European and national level. Guidance practitioners can give through their expertise the best possible orientation and decision-making support in the career planning of their clients.

Euroguidance's products and services also enable guidance professionals to look beyond their national horizons to learn from each other and take on new perspectives. Just as you will do in Dresden.

Another example of good networking is the Academia exchange programme of Euroguidance. Since 2016, more than 200 career guidance counsellors from the German Federal Employment Agency could complete a one-week study visit abroad to learn about the education and guidance systems of other countries, thus improving their guidance skills.

Euroguidance brings people together and makes Europe tangible for guidance professionals. The Euroguidance network is an excellent platform, as in Dresden, for guidance practitioners from all over Europe to learn from each other and share their knowledge and experience of good guidance practice.

For these reasons, I wish you a good event with excellent results.

Thank you and enjoy yours stay in the beautiful city of Dresden.