



IAEVG 2022 Communiqué

Challenges and Opportunities for Career Guidance towards Sustainability in the Aftermath of COVID-19 and Digital Transformation

For nearly three years to date, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on people's daily and professional lives in every country and region on the globe. In addition, staggering technological advances, especially digital transformation, are bringing fundamental global changes to the way we live, work, and relate to each other. Amid this upheaval, we are witnessing the military invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022 with the loss of tens of thousands of lives already. Moreover, we should be reminded that these profound contingencies have occurred during a tidal wave of global climate change, a grave crisis for all. We urgently need to reconsider our entire way of life, including our consumption and labour, to ensure sustainability for all creatures on this planet, - and that includes us. We are living in an age of disruption, and it is an unprecedented challenge to all of our knowledge, skills, solidarity, and resilience.

The aftermath of COVID-19 will not be the beginning of the "post-COVID-19" era. We are confronted with the question of how we can lead our lives humanely and develop our careers resiliently under "with-COVID-19" conditions that will persist in the future. At the same time, rapid and massive technological innovation has fundamentally changed the way we live and opened new career opportunities for us, while bringing the reality that robots and artificial intelligence are replacing much of the labour previously performed by humans, extending its major impact to middle-skilled jobs, even implying an era when humanity might become subservient to technology. We must also admit that such cutting-edge technological innovations accelerate the widening of social disparities. It is always the already privileged persons, groups, organizations, regions, and countries that are the first to benefit from sophisticated technologies. In those fortunate circumstances, the digital economy has created new incomes and more flexible and inclusive ways of working. However, a large portion of the world is not yet part of the digital economy because of the lack of investments in infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and education and training with appropriate career guidance. In particular women, youth, migrants, refugees, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, those living in poverty, and other vulnerable groups remain marginalized.

Then, is our future a world filled with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, without a ray of hope?

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The answer is a simple No. For example, we are facing a period of transformation called the "Fourth" Industrial Revolution. We should recall that the industrial revolutions in the past were always a threat to humanity at their inception. Perhaps the most typical example would be the Luddite movement that began in Nottingham in England and lasted from 1811 to 1816. It was started by craftsmen and labourers who feared the loss of their jobs due to the widespread use of machinery associated with the First Industrial Revolution. Although the British Parliament decreed that workers who destroyed machinery could be put to death, this did not immediately stop the Luddites. The First Industrial Revolution was an extreme threat to the people of the time. But for us, more than 200 years later, water power and steam engines are no longer the slightest threat. We have already overcome such threats three times. Experience suggests to us that a fourth time is also surmountable. As we transition to the Fifth Industrial Revolution or Industry 5.0, the interface between humans and technology brings a new era of innovation and challenge that will inevitably influence the nature of people's career concerns, new employment opportunities, and mechanisms for service delivery.

The same can be pointed out from the history of humanity, which has fought and overcome various infectious diseases since the beginning of time, as well as from the history of the world of work, which has undergone numerous metabolic changes along with social transformations. "Pessimism is due to the mood, optimism to the will; *Le pessimisme est d'humeur; l'optimisme est de volonté.*" as the French philosopher, Alain said. For us, career guidance practitioners, researchers, and administrators, the top priority is to positively uphold the will to overcome threats, disruptions, and disparities, as well as the confidence that we can do so. Otherwise, our clients and students will not be able to leave bleak future prospects that are eroding their confidence and hope.

Against this background, we must provide career guidance and counselling to everyone, prioritizing the most vulnerable and marginalized, and through advocacy and collaboration across practitioners, researchers, administrators, and policymakers, we must seek solutions to realize peaceful, decent work for all. Furthermore, it is an essential task for us to contribute to the creation of a digital economy nourishing global environmental integrity as well as sustainable development that leads to flexible, inclusive working conditions with no one left behind. As the IAEVG Ethical Guidelines state in their Preamble, the IAEVG is committed to the global provision of educational and vocational guidance. All IAEVG members are required to recognize that vocational choices and career development have an impact that reaches beyond the individual, including responsibilities to families, communities, and the larger society and environment. The *raison d'être* of the IAEVG is being tested at a time when the world is facing profound turmoil.