



# Work life visits

Employer representatives support material



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We warmly thank the funders for supporting the work and all the teachers, working life representatives and students involved in the projects and implementation for their feedback and valuable discussions and sharing experiences. Based on these, the training materials now at hand have been developed.

*For the linguistic finishing and streamlining of the text of this publication, MOT Kielipalvelu® was used. All content has been reviewed and approved by the authors.*

## Foreword

This support material is intended for teachers and instructors who arrange a working life visit for general upper secondary education students. The material provides tips for planning a visit with a working life representative as well as working tips before, during and after the visit.

In the KoKiVa project, we developed and tested a gender-sensitive working life-visiting model for cooperation with working life in general upper secondary schools. Education and career paths are strongly segregated by gender in Finland and that is why we developed and tested the model, website and teaching material together with general upper secondary education subject teachers and study counsellors as well as representatives of working life. The aim of the project was to develop a model to strengthen young people's understanding of working life and to offer perspectives on previously unknown fields as told by role models. We piloted the model with female representatives from the ICT sector and male representatives from the education and training sector. Organisations in the Oulu region, subject teachers, guidance counsellors and high school students, whose experiences and views have guided the formation of the material content, were involved in the development of the project. Now the material produced in the KoKiVa project has been compiled into educational material that can be utilised as part of the general upper secondary education's guidance and by subject teachers in the planning and implementation of teaching in different subjects. The material produced in the project, the experience of development and testing work during the project, and current results from the research field have been utilised in the compilation of the supporting material. We hope that this material will serve as a practical tool in the planning and implementation of teaching, and above all inspire general upper secondary education students to reflect on their own future and their relationship with working life.

We express our gratitude to both those who have worked on the projects and those who have funded the projects. We would also like to express our gratitude to the high school staff, working life representatives, and the young people involved in the projects.

Thanks also to Mervi Heikkinen for the interview and the opportunity to make use of these as part of the open learning materials.

Happy readings by Jenni, Suvi and Hanni

21.1.2026

## Welcome to prepare for the working life visit!

The supporting material provides information, tips and a customizable presentation base for planning and implementing a successful working life visit, considering the gender-sensitive approach for a working life representative. The supporting material includes a presentation base and a ready-made program body for the visit, which can be utilized if desired. In addition, we provide support on how to build interaction with students during a working life visit and possibly present your workplace remotely. It takes about 20 minutes to go through the supporting material. The material also includes additional reading material, which you can explore according to your own interest and time resource.

These visits allow young people to look at their competence and strengths and identify the connections between studying and working life with the subjects studied. The aim is that after the visit, young people will have more resources to plan their career choices guided by interest and strengths.

You can start by watching this short animation on gender segregation:

<https://youtu.be/OpvtX7OOF2w> (English subtitles)

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# 1. Introduction

The aim of the working life visit is to help young people make career choices guided by their own interests and strengths and to help them find a connection between the subject to be studied and working life. This will help young people plan for future career choices by increasing their knowledge of working life as part of their high school studies.

## 1.1. Young people need to know about working life

Young people may feel that they need to know already during high school what profession they will be retiring from. The connection between the diversity of professional fields, work tasks and career paths to studies may be limited. **Do you remember your own thoughts at the dawn of adulthood?** Time travel will help you to orient yourself in arranging a visit to suit young people's starting points.

## 1.2. Labour market needs young people

The Covid-19 pandemic showed that the nature of work can suddenly change. Change drivers, such as globalisation, sustainability transition and technological development, place future competence needs into a state of continuous change. Work and ways of working are undergoing a revolution, but working life is not a ship without a captain. Work life's ability to transform and adapt is central in building a fair, sustainable and inspiring future (1,2). For this, our labour market needs skilled young people who recognise the necessity of continuous learning on a transversal scale, guided by their own interests and strengths.

The aim of general upper secondary education is transversal competence. The instruction and guidance of each general upper secondary school subject should further strengthen the students' capabilities for further studies, work life and internationalisation as well as building a sustainable future (3). Labour market collaboration supports these objectives and achievement of necessary competencies.

### 1.3. Guiding effect of gender can be mitigated

In Finland, the labour market has become particularly segregated by gender (4). This is problematic from the perspective of both the individual and society. From society's perspective, segregation has been seen to slow down technological growth, hamper productivity, affect the gender pay gap and reduce the formation of different perspectives in innovations (5,6,7). Work behind Duuniskooppi has been motivated by an aim to find ways to mitigate gender-guiding effects on further education and career paths. Gender segregation is problematic for all genders. Interest in education and career choices as well as an individual's trust in one's own abilities are created and renewed as the sum of many factors. Attitudes and actions of role models and surrounding adults may influence opinions in one direction or another. Expectations and perceptions can in part also influence field of employment choices (8). As a visitor, you can reach young people and offer concrete information to support expectations and perceptions. The sectors most affected by segregation also face shortages of skilled employees. Future work life needs diverse experts from whom gender is neither a conscious nor unconscious guiding factor in career choices.

**We interviewed university lecturer and researcher Mervi Heikkinen about equality, gender and intersectionality. Watch the interview here: [Expert interview - Mervi Heikkinen](#) (Finnish subtitles included)**

**Make a difference by taking gender sensitivity into account during a visit –  
You will find tips on additional materials!**

For young people's views on working life, you can read, for example: Junior Achievement (JA) Finland <https://nuortennyty.fi/en/frontpage/>

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## 2. Instructions for carrying out a work life visit

There are no ready-made methods for cooperation with the high school. Cooperation often takes place with a student counsellor or subject teacher and the basis for cooperation may be an interesting field or job assignment, students' parents as working life representatives or, for example, alumni activities.

### 2.1. What to agree with the teacher before the visit:

- Mode of visit: online visit, on-site visit or students visiting the organisation's premises
- Duration: The visit has been planned to fit one upper secondary school lesson (75 min), taking approximately 45 min. If you agree on a longer duration, consider ways to encourage active participation from the students.
- Practical arrangements and necessary additional information depending on the implementation method:
  - Roles and division of labour
  - Utilising the Life Path task

The life path assignment in the additional resources facilitates telling and visualising career stories. If agreed, the task will also be completed by the teacher and students in preparation for the visit and will help frame the visit.

### 2.2. Methods of carrying out the visit

**Next, go to the targeted section according to the way the visit is executed by clicking on the title.**

**Online visit**

**Visit to the school on site**

**Visit to the organisation's premises**

## Online visit

### Online visits reach a wide audience

The structure of the visit can be as follows: Time estimates help plan a 45-minute visit.

- Introduction and presentation (approx. 5 min).
- What is our company or organisation like? (approx. 20 minutes)
  - Online visits remove the obstacle of distance but the organisation along with its activities, may feel distant and become embodied by the visitor. **Tours** (instructions below) are planned to include the organisation's premises, day-to-day practical activities and different job roles in the visit in a way that motivates students. Barring a tour, you can e.g. show a video shot beforehand or present visuals from the company.
- Presenting your career path (approx. 10 min)
- Class reflection and discussion (approx. 10 min)

### Before the visit

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- Agree on the remote connection to be used (Zoom, Teams, etc.).
- Find out whether students can be made visible to the visitor and how the teacher wants the students to participate during the online visit.
- Including interational approaches and practical examples are vital part of the planning process.

### Presentation material

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Design the presentation material to support the visit. You can use the template (pptx).

[Download it here \(pptx\)](#)

Consider the following questions:

- What would students like to learn from the visit?
- How have you utilised school subject skills and knowledge in your work?
- How is the applicable subject needed in your work?
- How can you describe and visualise your career path to the students in an interesting way?

You can use the template [Life path task](#) for visualising your path.

## Tour

Bring your organisation closer to students.

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- Take the students on a tour of your organisation's premises, presenting facilities, employees and job roles to your online audience.
- Technical implementation: you can join remote meetings e.g. by smartphone, sharing video footage as you move around the premises.
- Make sure that your work community is aware of the visit and knows which facilities you may visit.
- If you are showing the premises of a school or nursery, remember to ensure that guardians have given their consent for photographs and videos.
- Test your network connection, audio, and screen sharing functionality beforehand.

## Guiding questions for organisation introduction

The questions are designed to describe your job in a way that students will find interesting.

- How many people does your organisation employ?
- Which fields do they represent?
- How have you utilised school subject skills and knowledge in your work?
- How is the applicable subject needed in your work?
- What is the best part of your job? Where would there be room for improvement?
- How are occupational safety and well-being ensured at your workplace, and how do you maintain work-life balance?
- Does your organisation employ summer workers or short-term workers? If yes, how?
- How much can you influence your work?
- What are your working hours?
- What is your wage level?
- What kind of person would this workplace/field suit and why?

More tips for [interaction](#) and [how to consider gender sensitivity](#)

## Visit to the school on site

**A close visit brings opportunities for diverse interaction.** For example, the body of a visit may follow the following pattern. Time estimates help plan a visit for 45 min implementation.

- Introduction and presentation (approx. 10 minutes)
- What is our company or organisation like? Below are guiding questions. (approx. 15 min)
  - Students cannot see different professions on the job or they cannot see the organisation's premises. If possible, bring photographs or videos and practical examples of work tasks and describe the educational background of different employees. Can a colleague give a short remote tour of your premises, or can you use a pre-recorded video tour?
- Presenting your career path (approx. 10 min)
- Joint reflection and discussion with students (approx. 10 minutes)

### Guiding questions for organisation introduction.

- The questions are designed to describe your job in a way that students will find interesting.
- How many people does your organisation employ?
- Which fields do they represent?
- How have you utilised school subject skills and knowledge in your work?
- How is the applicable subject needed in your work?
- What is the best part of your job? Where would there be room for improvement?
- How are occupational safety and well-being ensured at your workplace, and how do you maintain work-life balance?
- Does your organisation employ summer workers or short-term workers? If yes, how?
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- What are your working hours?
- What is your wage level?
- What kind of person would this workplace/field suit and why?

**Additional material:** [life path task](#), [tips on interaction](#) and [to consider gender sensitive guidance](#)

## On site at the organisation's premises

**The visit gets youth close to practice.** The way a visit is carried out depends a lot on the nature of the organization's facilities, but the frame can follow the following pattern, for example. Time estimates help plan a visit for 45min implementation.

- Kick-off, introduction, motivating students to participate (approx. 5 min)
- Career path introduction – how did you end up where you are? (approx. 10 min).
- What is our company or organisation like? – tour of the premises, if possible (approx. 20–30 min)
- Joint reflection and discussion with students

### Before the visit

*Discuss any security and data protection issues with the teacher. The teacher is to ensure that their students are covered by their school's insurance throughout the visit. The teacher is responsible for their students during the visit. Consider the following questions at the design stage and use our additional resources.*

- Is it possible to arrange a moment for sharing presentation material in the premises?
- Prepare presentation material, if necessary.
- How can you describe and visualise your career path to the students in an interesting way?
- What would you like for students to learn from your visit?

### Guiding questions for organisation introduction

*The questions are designed to describe your job in a way that students will find interesting.*

- How many people does your organisation employ?
- Which fields do they represent?
- How have you utilised school subject skills and knowledge in your work?
- How is the applicable subject needed in your work?
- What is the best part of your job? Where would there be room for improvement?
- How are occupational safety and well-being ensured at your workplace, and how do you maintain work-life balance?
- Does your organisation employ summer workers or short-term workers? If yes, how?
- How much can you influence your work?
- What are your working hours?
- What is your wage level?
- What kind of person would this workplace/field suit and why?

**Additional material:** [life path task](#), [tips on interaction](#) and [consider gender sensitive guidance](#)

## Additional material

### Life path task

Download the task to your computer by clicking on the text below:

#### [Life Path Mission \(pptx\)](#)

The life path task helps you understand your career story that you can present to students during their work life visit. As a employer representative, you are an important role model when discussing diverse career paths and factors that influence them.

If you have agreed with the teacher that the life path task will be used as a guideline during the visit, the students will begin formulating their own life path with their teacher's guidance before the visit. The teacher also does the task in preparation for the visit. You can also use a collaborative task to encourage interaction.

**Write down life phases and experiences that have been particularly significant to you**

#### **Examples:**

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- Years for primary school, middle school, secondary and tertiary education
- Hobbies
- Moving from one municipality to another
- Internships and work placements, studies, summer jobs, other employments
- Mistakes/errors/difficult situations or work assignments
- Skills/strengths/abilities

## The Importance of Gender Sensitive Guidance

Gender can be approached from several different starting points. The gender-sensitive starting point identifies the effects of cultural meanings associated with gender. At the same time, the perspective shifts from children to adults who educate and guide them. The key question is the breeder's own actions and the perceptions, assumptions and prejudices that guide them (1).

Education and the labour market In Finland, they are segregated or segregated by gender (2). Gender differences in an individual's speech and behavior often appear unnoticed and unintentionally and making these unconscious behaviors and attitudes visible enables the development of equal practices (3).

Gender segregation can already be seen in school (4). In the fields of education and the labour market, genderisation is reflected in the wages and responsibilities of all genders and their opportunities to influence (5). This can be broken down, among other things, by gender-sensitive policies.

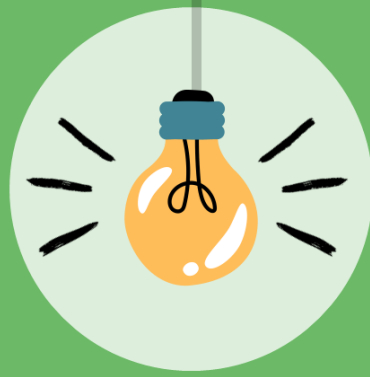
Gender-sensitive approaches to guidance are important from the perspective of all genders. To mitigate gender segregation in working life, students need to be guided to see new educational and career opportunities and encourage young people to make choices based on their own interests and strengths (6). Permanent interest is generated in stages, and support and knowledge are needed to achieve this (7). It is not a feature that a person either has or does not have.

Gender-aware approaches can be used to mitigate the influence of gender career choices (8). The goal of designing a visitation model has been to promote this goal by raising awareness of the phenomenon, supporting teaching staff and visitors, and providing role models for young people.

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## Tips for gender sensitive guidance



### FOCUS ON THE PRACTICAL

Give an example of a typical workday.  
Describe what you do and with whom.

### GLANCE INTO THE FUTURE

Describe what actions promote a fair and healthy future.

Describe the employment situation and career options.

### EMPHASIZE SKILLS

Identify necessary skills.  
Emphasize the importance of skills irrespective of gender.

### DO NOT GENERALISE

Do not assume interest from gender.  
Do not emphasize gender, unless it is relevant for the matter at hand.

### REMEMBER GENDER DIVERSITY

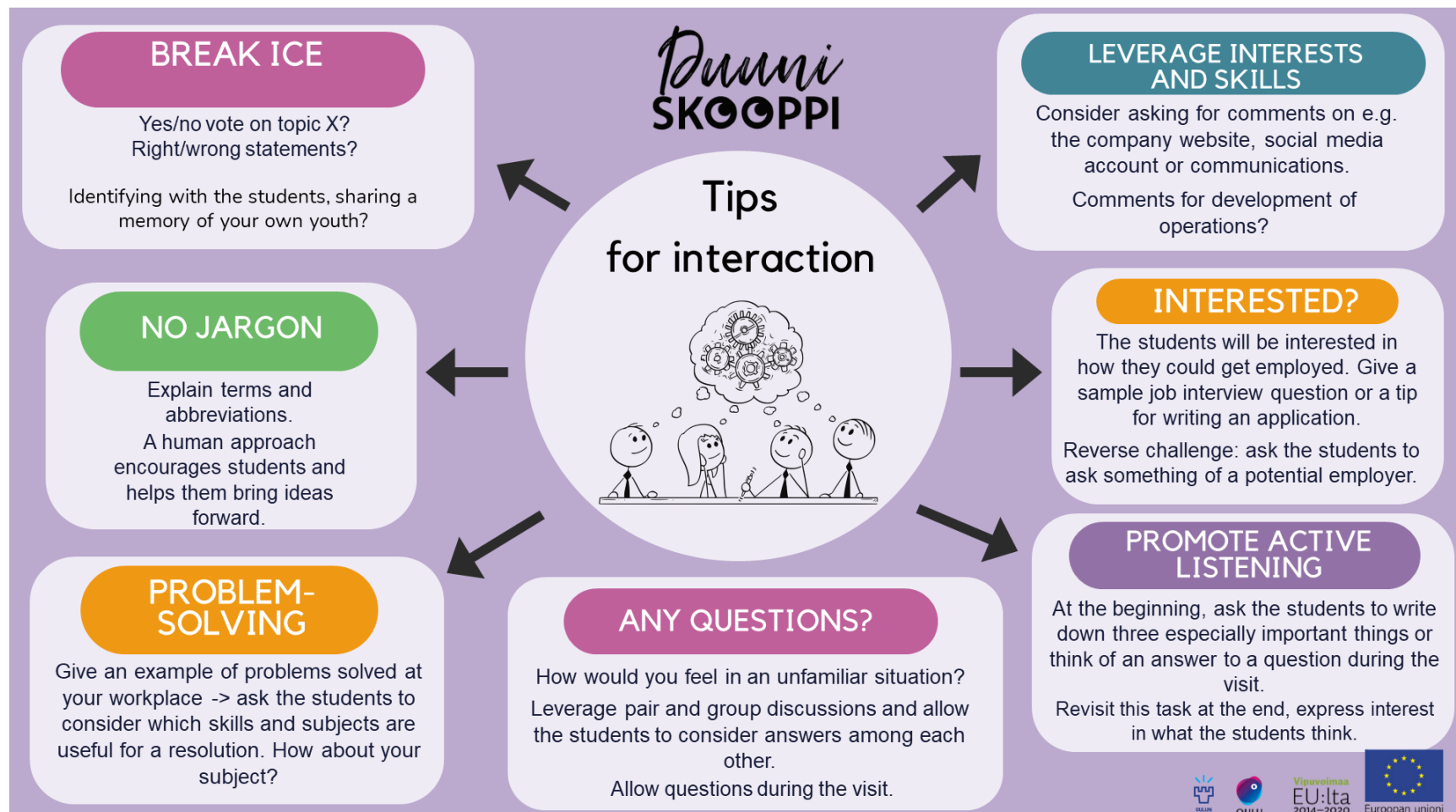
When addressing the group, use e.g. *young people* or *students* instead of gendered words.

### DO NOT COMPARE GENDERS

~~"Girls can become engineers, too, if they work hard."  
"Boys can be good at crafts as well."  
"Game designers can be female."~~

## Tips for interaction

The students do not know you and you do not know them; this can be a challenge for spontaneous interaction. This image gives a few tips that for a more relaxing atmosphere, dialogue and raising the students' interest through interactive experiences. As a visitor, you can be an experienced presenter or a beginner – choose the method or methods that best suit you and the visit.



## Occupational segregation by gender requires attention

Occupational segregation, or segregation by gender, is a complex phenomenon that involves several factors. Segregation is only the top of the iceberg: there are multiple factors under the surface. Occupational interests are affected e.g. by subject interests, support and barriers, culture, attitudes, expectations and perceptions of each field as well as belief in one's abilities (1). The cultural influence of gender, on the other hand, can have an impact on which paths people are encouraged and guided to take, and this may factor into the segregation of different fields of employment later. Are all genders encouraged to partake in different activities equally, or are individuals automatically and perhaps subconsciously offered different kinds of guidance depending on for example, their gender?

While gender-linked attitudes can be subconscious, studies offer extensive evidence of unequal treatment of different genders. Gender has been observed to influence how a child is treated at different ages: for instance, researchers have observed that girls and boys were complimented differently and given different responsibilities in a nursery environment. Girls were complimented for being helpful and a greater degree of independence was expected of them, while boys received compliments for their personality traits (2). Additionally, a study involving upper secondary school students found that guidance counselling received by students is affected by their gender. Girls and boys with the same interests were encouraged to seek different professional roles. For example, girls were encouraged to pursue teaching jobs while boys were encouraged to seek leadership roles (3).

Unequal treatment may have far-reaching consequences, for instance with regard to career choices. Girls have been found to face more negative prejudice towards their mathematical skills at school and at home (4, 5, 6) even though no differences have been found in their mathematical skills compared to boys (7, 8, 9, 10). This, in turn, may affect the development of mathematical self-efficacy and mathematical interest, which have been found to be linked to later interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) (11, 12, 13). In the 2017 Gender Equality Barometer, men reported having received less support for gender-atypical choices after basic education than women (14). Additionally, there is evidence that men choosing to pursue nursing are

appreciated less for their choice than women are for choosing STEM careers (15). Following this, encouragement can have a significant impact when a young person contemplates future career paths (1, 3, 22, 24).

In addition to encouragement, belonging has been found to correlate with women's interest in pursuing STEM careers. The same applies to men's interest in seeking a career in the Social and Health sectors, as well as in Education (16). Students in a field deemed atypical for their gender have been found to discontinue their studies more often than students representing the majority gender in their field (14). Not feeling welcome in gender-atypical education or employment may drive individuals to gender-typical fields (17).

At the moment, not much is known of gender minorities' career choices (18), but gender minorities have been found to be underrepresented in STEM fields. A 2023 study found that non-binary students in technical fields experienced less belonging compared to other students (19). In general, gender minorities experience discrimination in the labour market (20).

A complex phenomenon like segregation needs to be met with collaboration. Attitudes, work cultures and societal structures must change. One way to do this is to provide our youth with role models and inform them of the diverse possibilities of different fields, and by doing so, encourage and drive interest for different options. However, different fields should not be presented as better or worse to people of different genders. Reducing the influence of gender is crucial for enabling each individual to make choices according to their interests and strengths.

*Author: Anna-Eveliina Haapakangas*

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