



International  
Labour  
Organization

# ► How to choose my future profession?

A step-by-step guide for job seekers



Guides collection :  
« *Building My Future at Work* »



▶ **How to choose  
my future profession?**  
A step-by-step guide for job seekers



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## ► How to choose my future profession ? A step-by-step guide for job seekers

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In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 8th Goal of the SDGs concerns, among others, the global mobilization to provide everyone with decent work. In this context, the ILO has drawn up an international Action Plan for Youth Employment, which aims to mobilize all energies to enable young people, girls and boys, to build a professional future corresponding to their aspirations.

This guide is part of the "toolbox" for young people and those who support them, in particular in the Public Employment Services.

This is the first "step-by-step" guide in the "Building my future at work" collection, and will be followed by other titles relating to job search techniques, information on new professions (green jobs, digital jobs) etc.

While this Guide is primarily meant to support young women and men in choosing their future professions, it is not just for young people. Choosing a profession is an important step in the transition from education to the world of work, and an important decision. But, professional life spans several decades, and during this long period we may all be faced with changes that may require us to look for another job or a new profession. The skill to orient oneself to such changes is therefore a necessary one for each of us. This is even more important today with a fast evolving world of work, linked to demographic, climate and technological changes. As we all know, some professions as we know them today will likely disappear, and new ones may be created. We all need to prepare for such changes and manage such changes in our professional careers by developing our skills, by continuing to learn throughout the life course and by being aware of new opportunities. The Guide therefore is important for all of us. It will support young women and men, as well as others, to anticipate and address changes proactively for a more fulfilling professional future over the life course.

**Mrs Sukti DASGUPTA**

Chief of the Employment, Labour Markets and Youth Branch  
International Labour Organisation (ILO – Geneva)

In the 21st century, it is increasingly rare to exercise the same professional activity for a whole lifetime. Each and everyone of us will have to question our future professions on several occasions, willy-nilly.

Choosing a new profession can be a real opportunity to fulfill yourself in your professional life by identifying the activity that will suit you best, in the environment that is yours. It is not a question of making foolish dreams, but of determining a realistic and achievable profession with regard to the job market, your tastes, abilities and constraints.

Whatever your age, this “step-by-step” guide is for you. It provides a simple method, suitable for all countries, to build your professional project independently.

This guide is not a magic tool that will instantly answer the questions you may ask about your future profession. This process will require real work on yourself, investment, several days of reflection, and research, we suggest that you use this document as a personal workbook. Write directly on it. Write down your ideas, thoughts, decisions ...

But choosing a profession is not a solitary process. Do not hesitate to ask for the opinions and contributions of your friends and family. And above all, if you get stuck when using the guide or in your reflection, you can always seek advice from the employment or guidance professionals in your city. The counsellors from Public employment services are there to support you. This guide is also intended for them to enrich their "toolbox".

Good luck in building your future!

**François DUMORA**

Employment Services Specialist  
Career Guidance Referent

International Labour Organisation - GENEVA - 2021

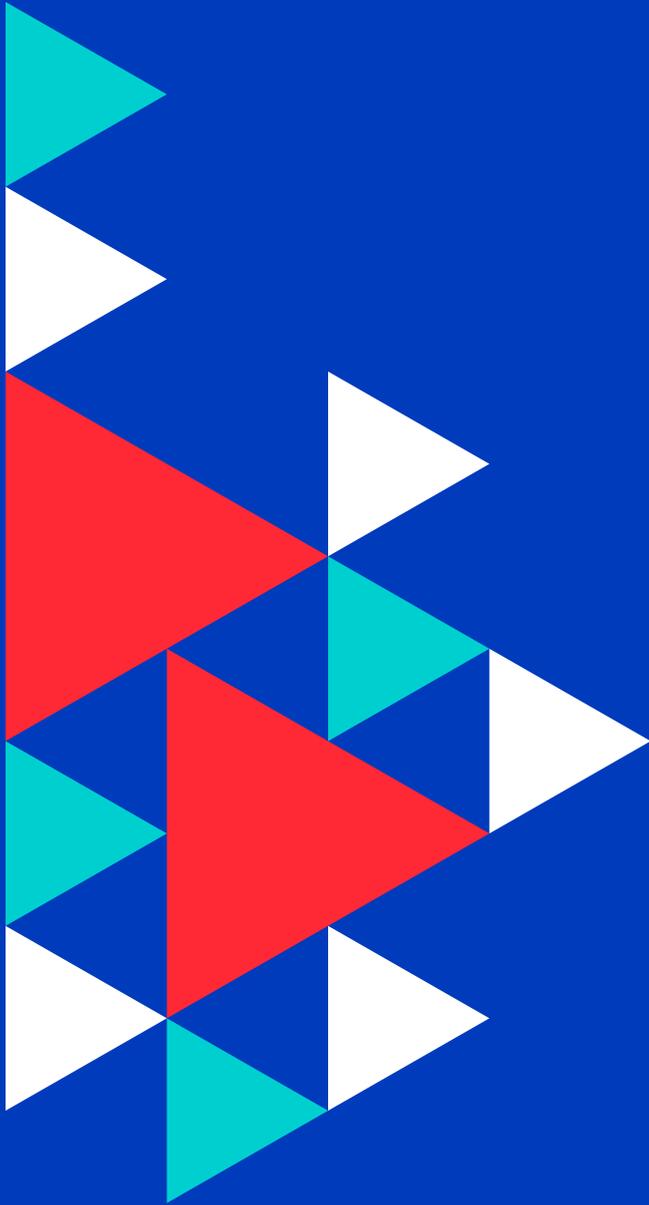
## The four legs of the journey :



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# 1 Getting to know myself better

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▀▀ I learn to identify my interests, my strengths, my expectations, my skills, my values, my constraints, my preferences and priorities, from a professional point of view



Architecte

## ▶ 1-1 : My technical skills

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### What are we talking about ?

- ▶ Throughout our lives we keep learning: at school, in training, in business, with family, with friends ... Our professional experiences are very fruitful moments of accelerated learning which enrich who we are. Here you will try and list the main technical skills that you have acquired.
- ▶ A technical skill is the expertise and control of a method or the use of specific machinery technological in nature, acquired in a specialized area. This expertise is based on theoretical, practical, technical knowledge and experience.
- ▶ If you now want to change jobs, you may not think it is worthwhile listing items from your past experiences. However, this is essential, because many skills acquired are transferable to professions that may seem very remote to you

### Examples :

- ▶ Installing a window
- ▶ Buying at the best price
- ▶ Applying hair extensions
- ▶ Reading a weather map ,,,



Teleconsultant

Your list...

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## ▶ 1-2 : My social and transversal skills

### What are we talking about ?

- ▶ A social skill is the ability to communicate and interact in a positive way with those around you (work relations, family ...)
- ▶ A transversal skill can be used whatever the sector of activity or the profession. 14 skills are generally taken into consideration (see the definition on next page):

Adaptability	Organisational Skills
Stress management	Thoroughness
Team work	Making proposals
Capacity to bring people together	Curiosity
Communication skills	Determination
Autonomy	Taking a step back
Decision-making capacity	Responsiveness

▶ 60 % of employers think transversal skills are more important than technical skills.

#### Top 3 skills most valued :

- ▶ Ability to organise and prioritize tasks
- ▶ Adaptability
- ▶ Autonomy

### Examples of social skills :

- ▶ Negotiating
- ▶ Arguing
- ▶ Managing difficult situations ...



Your list...

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## ► Definitions of transversal skills

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### ► Adaptability :

Ability to adapt to various situations and to adjust to organisations, work groups, habits and values specific to the company.

### ► Stress management :

Ability to maintain self-control to act effectively in irritating, unforeseen or stressful situations.

### ► Teamwork:

Ability to work and coordinate with others within the company in confidence and transparency to achieve set objectives.

### ► Capacity to bring people together:

Ability to mobilize a team / interlocutors and to train them in the pursuit of a shared objective.

### ► Communication skills:

Ability to clearly convey information, exchange, listen actively, receive information and messages and be open-minded.

### ► Autonomy :

Ability to take charge of one's activity without having to be continuously supervised.

### ► Decision-making capacity :

Ability to make choices for taking action, to take charge of one's activity and to be accountable.

### ► Organisational skills :

Ability to plan, prioritise, anticipate actions taking into account the means, resources, objectives and schedule to achieve them.

### ► Thoroughness:

Ability to perform tasks by accurately following rules, procedures, instructions that have been provided without making an error, and to transmit information accurately.

### ► Making proposals :

Ability to initiate, imagine new proposals to resolve identified problems or improve a situation. Being proactive.

### ► Curiosity :

Ability to go beyond what is given to see, to open up to novelty and to investigate to understand and act appropriately.

### ► Determination:

Ability to maintain effort until the complete completion of a task regardless of the unforeseen or obstacles encountered.

### ► Taking a step back :

Ability to demonstrate objectivity, to take distance to analyse facts, situations and interactions before acting or making a decision.

### ► Responsiveness:

Ability to react quickly to events and unforeseen events, by prioritising actions, according to their degree of urgency / importance.

## ▶ 1-3 : What is important to me

### What are we talking about ?

What are the major characteristics of your professional preferences? The ideal setting in which you imagine working is a combination of Interests, Values and Work environment.

▶ Some examples to support your reflection and identify your preferences:

- ✓ Autonomy
- ✓ Status
- ✓ Power
- ✓ Prestige
- ✓ Solidarity
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Competition
- ✓ Remuneration
- ✓ Freedom
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Team
- ✓ Atmosphere
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ Calm
- ✓ Diversity
- ✓ Spare time
- ✓ Intellectual stimulation
- ✓ Equity
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Altruism
- ✓ Promotions
- ✓ Serious
- ✓ Thoroughness
- ✓ Creativity
- ✓ Outdoors
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Evolution
- ✓ Calm
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Changes
- ✓ Stability
- ✓ Working hours
- ✓ Intensity
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Framing
- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Home

Your list...

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Estate Agent

## ► 1-4 : My constraints

### What are we talking about ?

Before deciding on the choice of a profession, it is essential to identify your own constraints in order to compare them with the working conditions of the various professions envisaged. Four categories of constraints : mobility, health, family, working hours and working days

<p><b>Working hours and working days</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working only at night</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working nightly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working during the day</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working in a team (3 x 8) with change of teams according to the schedules</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working every saturday</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working every sunday</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working every other weekend</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working every week-end</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mobility - ability to move</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working in my neighbourhood</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working all over my town</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working in location more than an hour away from home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working away from home and not coming home every night</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider moving to find a job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working in another country</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I don't have any transport solution (personal or public)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I don't have a driving license</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family - children and dependents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have no solution to bring my kids to school if I'm at work at the same time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have no solution for babysitting my children when I'm at work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If I take care of a dependent person at my home (elderly or disabled person), I have no solution to have me replaced when I am at work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health and posture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working on my feet all day</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working standing for several hours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working seated all day</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working seated for several hours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working with repetitive gestures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working on screen</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider carrying heavy loads</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working at height</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I can't consider working outside, in cold / hot weather</li> </ul>



# 2 Discovering professions

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►► The professional world is not limited to the few professions that surround you: in the family, with neighbours, friends, in the media or on social networks ,,,

►► Open up horizons ! There are over 530 types of professions and over 10,000 job titles. Discover them !



Acrobat

## ▶ 2-1 : Job ideas from my professional portrait

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### What are we talking about ?

- ▶ The previous pages of this guide have guided you in drawing your professional portrait : skills, values, areas of interest, constraints ...
- ▶ Inspired by this portrait, imagine and write down all the new craft ideas that cross your mind. Even if some ideas seem absurd or unrealistic to you, do not rule out any of them for now
- ▶ Do the same with those around you. Show your professional portrait to several trusted people, family or friends, and ask them the question : "Reading this portrait, what career ideas are you thinking of ? Don't limit yourself. Tell me whatever comes to mind ".



Motorbike mechanic

Your list...

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## ▶ 2-2 : Job ideas from professional fields

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### What are we talking about ?

- ▶ Economic activities and professions can be classified into specific fields, the number of which can vary according to the level of detail chosen. Here is a list of 32 areas.
- ▶ From this list, alone and with those around you, list job ideas that you may find interesting.

- |                                  |  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| ✓ Agriculture                    | ✓ Defence - security - rescue          | ✓ Mechanical - maintenance           |
| ✓ Food industry                  | ✓ Law                                  | ✓ Digital - multimedia - audiovisual |
| ✓ Animals                        | ✓ Publishing - printing - book         | ✓ Health                             |
| ✓ Architecture - interior design | ✓ IT - electronics                     | ✓ Science - math - physics           |
| ✓ Crafts                         | ✓ Education - training                 | ✓ Secretariat - reception            |
| ✓ Bank - finance - insurance     | ✓ Environment                          | ✓ Social - personal services         |
| ✓ Building                       | ✓ Management - audit - human resources | ✓ Beauty care - hairdressing         |
| ✓ Biology - chemistry            | ✓ Hotel industry - catering - tourism  | ✓ Sport - entertainment              |
| ✓ Trade - real estate            | ✓ Humanitarian                         | ✓ Logistics - transport              |
| ✓ Communication - information    | ✓ Industry - materials                 | ✓ Internet service platforms         |
| ✓ Culture - show                 | ✓ Letters - human sciences             |                                      |

### Your list...

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## ► 2-3 : Job ideas from centres of interest

According to psychologist Jean HOLLAND, interest motivates the person to invest in order to experience well-being and satisfaction. His studies show that each person has dominant interests related to their personality. He identified 6 main types of professional interests that cover all existing professions.

Try to identify your dominant interests based on the definitions below. You will also find job names there that can guide you to other ideas.

Types of interests	Definitions & job ideas
<b>REALISTIC</b>	Practicality, simplicity. Is attracted to concrete, manual activities. Ex : truck driver, mechanic, farmer, building trades, upholsterer, cabinet-maker, dressmaker, cook, fisherman, dental technician ,,,
<b>INVESTIGATIVE</b>	Open-minded, curious, has a taste for study. Observes and experiments to understand. Ex : biologist, engineer, geologist, laboratory assistant, librarian, computer scientist ,,,
<b>ARTISTIC</b>	Intuitive, original. Expresses emotions through speech, the arts, and writing. Ex : Musician, interior designer, fashion designer, craftsman, photographer, hairdresser, tailor, sculptor ,,,
<b>SOCIAL</b>	Sensitive to the problems of others. Focuses on helping, educating, treating . Ex : Teacher, caregiver, educator, employment counsellor, firefighter, sports coach, trainer, social worker ,,,
<b>ENTERPRISING</b>	Seeks to lead or influence others. Energetic and ambitious. Ex : business manager, lawyer, salesperson, business creator, team manager, cook ,,,
<b>CONVENTIONAL</b>	Conscientious, diligent, enjoys order, administrative work. Ex : secretary, accountant, librarian, customs officer, computer programmer, human resources manager ,,,

Your list...

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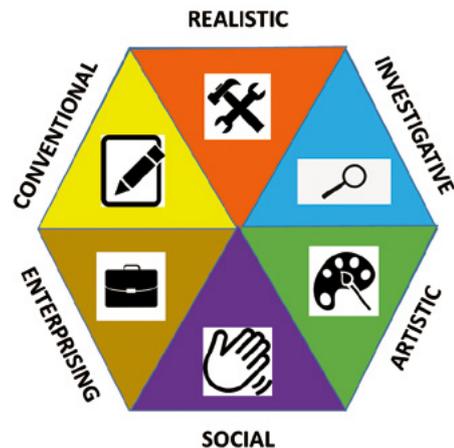
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## ▶ 2-4 : Future of work

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### What are we talking about ?

- ▶ While you are looking for career ideas, we suggest that you incorporate elements on the future of work into your thinking. The world of employment is changing. Jobs are disappearing, others are being created to respond to changes in our planet :
  - ▶ Demographic growth in southern countries
  - ▶ Aging population in northern countries
  - ▶ Global warming
  - ▶ Depletion of natural resources
  - ▶ Search for new non-polluting and sustainable energies
  - ▶ Digitization of all aspects of the economy ,,,
- ▶ To continue your search for career ideas, we suggest that you research on the internet about the 4 major sectors below.

### ▶ Digital economy



### ▶ Blue economy



### ▶ Care economy



### ▶ Green economy



## ▶ 2-5 Sort and prioritize your ideas

---

### What are we talking about ?

- ▶ Gather in a single list of all the professions you have thought of
- ▶ For each of the listed professions, ask yourself the question of its compatibility with your professional portrait, in particular with regard to your personal constraints.
- ▶ With the remaining professions, establish a ranking of your Top 5

My list of professions	Compatibility with my professional portrait yes/no

### Top 5

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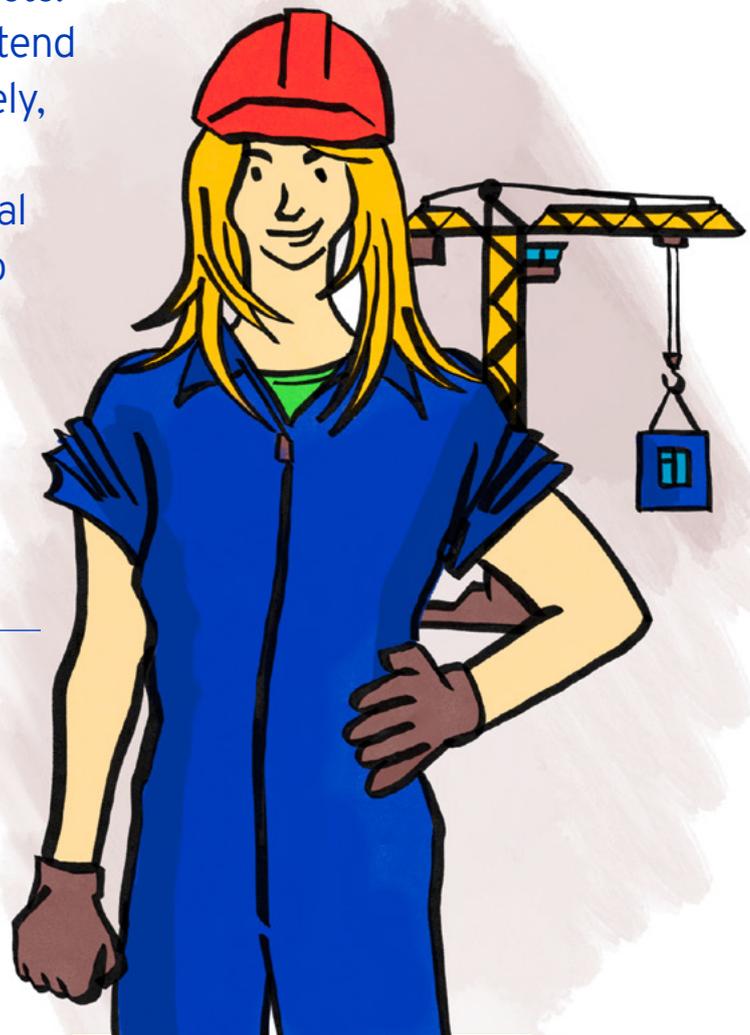


# 3 Choosing my future profession

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▣▣ All professions have positive and negative aspects. From the outside, we may tend to idealize them or, reversely, see their adverse aspects only. It is therefore essential to investigate into each job prospect in order to make informed choices.

▣▣ Documentary research and surveys of professionals



Crane driver

## ▶ 3-1 Documentary research

---

### What are we talking about ?

Information on occupations constitutes a more or less rich documentary base depending on the country; however with the Internet, all these dematerialized sources are shareable and accessible by all. Check with the employment services in your country to access this information locally.

#### Different sources of information:

- ❑ **Directories of trades and jobs** : often drawn up by labour ministries or public employment offices, these catalogs identify the main existing professions. You can also consult the **International Standard Classification of Occupation** by ILO <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco88/major.htm>
- ❑ **Sector and job sheets**: often produced by organizations in charge of vocational guidance for schoolchildren, these sheets describe the jobs with an emphasis on the initial training course required to achieve this.
- ❑ **Labour market information** : websites aiming to present a statement of employment supply and demand for each sector or trade according to geographic areas.
- ❑ **Job vacancy sites** : public or private, consulting these sites allows you to get an immediate and real view of the volume of job vacancies in a profession in the geographic sector that interests you. Consulting current offers allows you to know the types of contracts offered; the expectations of employers in terms of diplomas, skills and experience; the remuneration offered.

#### What information to look for

- ▶ Necessary training and access conditions
- ▶ State of the labour market
- ▶ Working conditions
- ▶ Main activities
- ▶ Recruitment methods



## ▶ 3-2 Surveys of professionals

---

### What are we talking about ?

The survey of professionals is essential. This is the only way that will allow you to be confronted with the realities of the business in order to make relevant choices. The ideal is to meet 2 to 3 professionals for each profession track. You may think this is going to take you a long time: it is true. But these are extremely rich exchanges to be successful in choosing your profession. This investigative time will be a great investment !

### What Questions to ask ?

- ▶ Can you describe a working day for me? What main activities?
- ▶ Your working conditions? (pace, schedules ...)
- ▶ What do you like most ?
- ▶ What do you like least ?
- ▶ The skills and knowledge needed for this job ?
- ▶ Advice to someone who wants to move into this profession today ?
- ▶ Can you direct me to colleagues who would also be ready to answer my questions ?



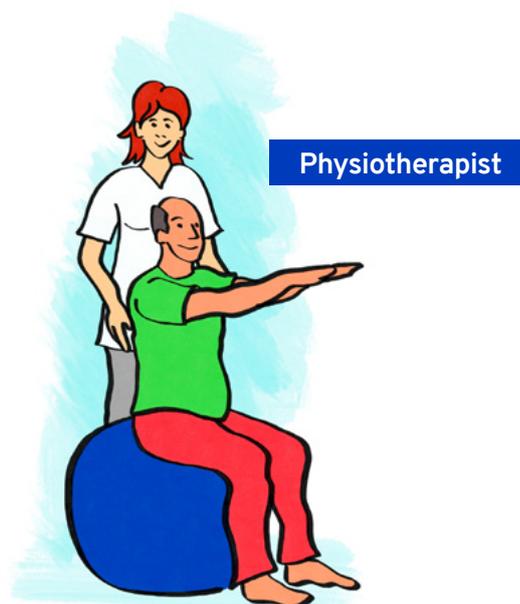
Cook

## ► 3-3 : The moment of decision

### What are we talking about ?

After having carried out your professional portrait, discovered professions, investigated these professions, you have all the elements to make your choice. It is a question of determining the profession that will best match your profile, your environment and your aspirations. Here is a decision support table.

This job is compatible with: YES / NO	J1	J2	J3	J4	J5
Job title					
My level of education. I have the sufficient level to integrate the training					
My acquired knowledge and skills					
My values : ...					
My interests : ...					
My preferences : ...					
My constraints: ...					
The labour market for this profession is: favourable / balanced / difficult					
Average salary for this job					
<b>My final ranking</b>					





# 4 Building my own strategy

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After in-depth reflection, research and prioritization, you have just identified your future profession. This is your professional project.

Here we provide you with advice to make your project come true, that is to say, to practice your chosen profession in the near future.



**Hairdresser**

## ► 4-1 : The stages of the action plan

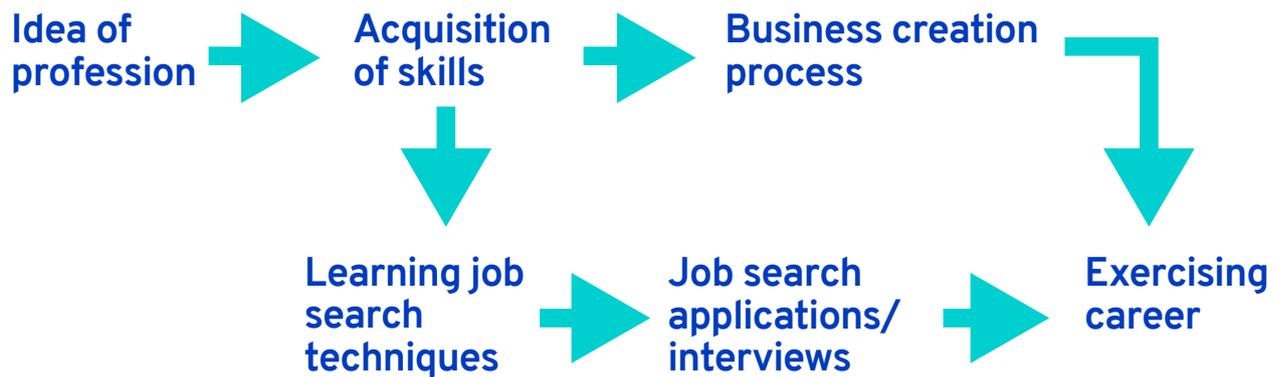
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### What are we talking about ?

Depending on the profession you have chosen, the actions to be implemented may take two different paths:

- Either it is a matter of creating your own activity as a self-employed worker: Structures and guides exist to assist you in the stages of setting up a business.
- Either it is a salaried job : then a job search strategy must be developed.

Upstream, since this is a new job for you, it will probably be necessary to acquire new skills by receiving training.



Use the grid on the next page to formalize the steps of your action plan and follow it



Female firefighter

## ► 4-2 : Formalising the Action Plan

Actions	Deadline	With whom, where, how?	Executed ?	
			Y/N	Corrective action
Present my project to those around me				
Present my project to people and organizations who can advise or help me				
Identify the skills I am missing				
Develop my training project (* advice on next page)				
Find funding for my training				
Follow my training (s) and obtain the diploma (s)				
Prepare a CV adapted to my project				
Target companies and establish my job search strategy				
Lift any barriers				
Make spontaneous applications				
Use social media wisely				
Prepare for job interviews				
Prepare for my arrival in the company and my first days in my new position				

### 4-21 / My training project

▶ Do I need a diploma or professional title to practice my future job ?

- YES
- NO

▶ What skills do I lack to exercise my future profession ?

- ,
- ,
- ,

▶ I identify several training solutions :

- Alternately
- Face to face
- Remote...



▶ I identify and contact several training organizations :

	Training centre no 1	Training centre no 2	Training centre no 3
Name of training centre			
Course title			
Kind of validation or diploma			
Place or city			
Duration			
Starting date			
Selection conditions			
Cost of training			
Financing solutions			

Be aware that there are free training platforms on the internet. Examples : [edx.org](https://edx.org)    [coursera.org](https://coursera.org)

## Congratulations !

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✔✔ You have followed the 4 steps required to choose your future profession and thus you have been able to define your professional project.

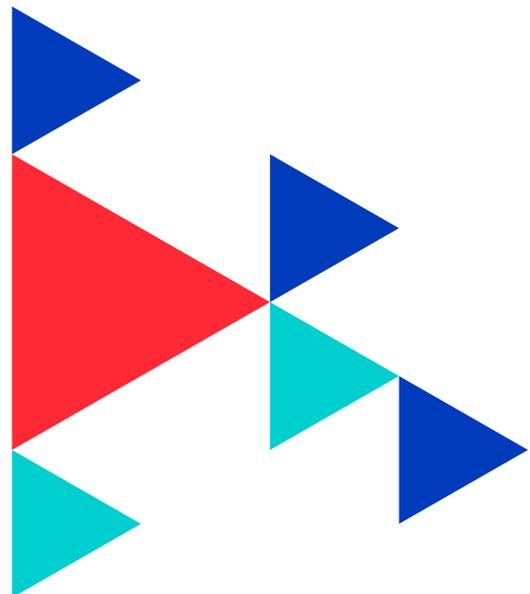
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✔✔ You are now entering the implementation phase. This step will be shorter or longer depending on your project. Our last tip: don't be alone. Several organizations exist in your environment to advise and guide you. Also ask for advice and support from people around you.

---

✔✔ In your professional life, it is very important to create and maintain a network. Networking can have a negative image that makes people think they are using patronage. However, networking is essential to stay informed of developments in your industry and to keep pace with the world of work.

✔✔ The approach you have just implemented can be reproduced as often as necessary. At other times in your career, you will be able to mobilize it again, by updating your portrait and broadening your research.



Other English materials to be consulted to choose your profession :

- ✓ “My guide to employment to young people in the Pacific”  
[https://www.ilo.org/suva/publications/WCMS\\_230942/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/suva/publications/WCMS_230942/lang--en/index.htm)
- ✓ O\*NET Career Exploration Tools from USA / <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/onet/tools>
- ✓ National Careers Service from UK : <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>
- ✓ Career quizzes and tests on JOB BANK from Gvt of Canada :  
<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning/quizzes>
- ✓ The National Career Advice Portal from Republic of South Africa : <http://ncap.careerhelp.org.za/>



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  - ▶ Reine CHATENAY, head of agency, from French Guyana
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## What is the ILO ?

The International Labour Organization is the first specialized agency of the United Nations.

The ILO brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers from 187 member states to set international standards, develop policies and design programs to advance social justice and promote decent work for all women and men in the world.

Professional life seldom takes the form of a straight path without pitfalls. Getting from school to work is often a complex first step. Then being able to keep a job throughout one's life is often difficult because of the economic environment, the evolution of professions or one's own aspirations. Life is made up of transitions that you have to know how to manage.

Changes in the labour market are accelerating :

- ✓ Many professions are experiencing transformations linked to digitization
- ✓ Other professions are disappearing or relocating due to globalization
- ✓ New professions are being created to face the challenges of climate change, the need for a low-carbon economy or changes in lifestyles.

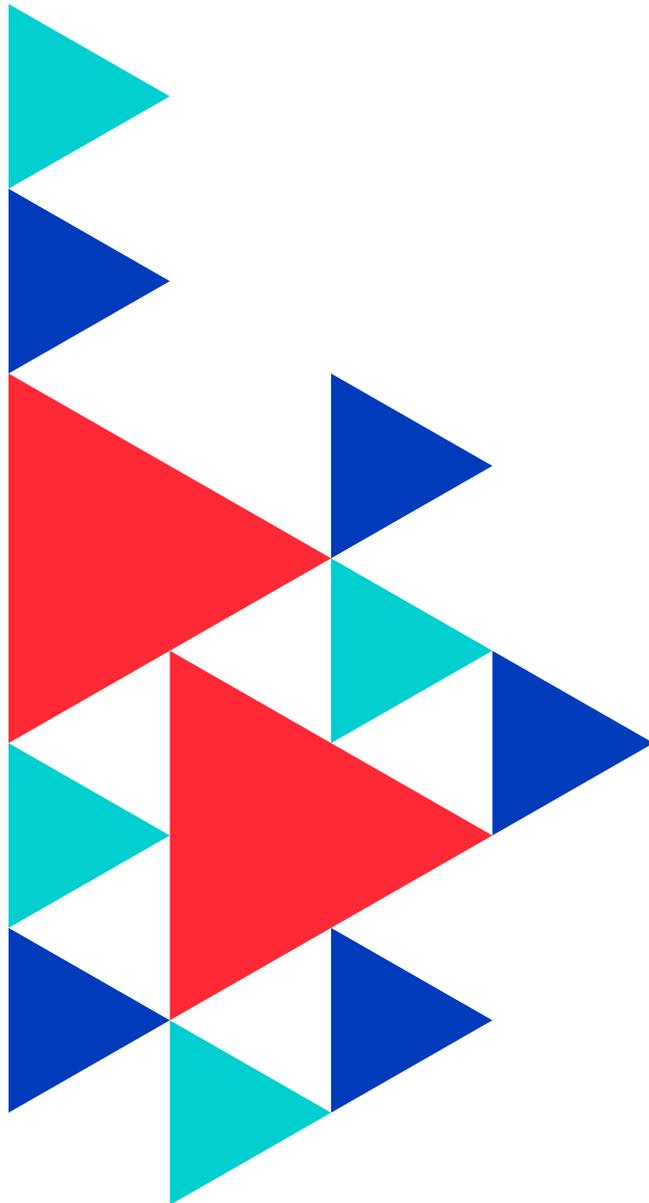
In its 2019 Future of Work report, the ILO calls for "investing more in the institutions, policies and strategies that will support people in future transitions to work. "

Every citizen of the planet must be able to orient and train throughout life so as not to undergo changes in their environment, but on the contrary to seize them as opportunities.

"Supporting individuals through these transitions will broaden their choices and provide them with the security they need to face change. This will allow them to shape their professional life. "

This guide constitutes a concrete expression of the ILO's guidelines on supporting transitions.





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