

Career Transition Series

PIVOTING OUTSIDE THE UN SYSTEM

WELCOME TO

Navigating Career Transition Beyond the UN: Finding Direction, Confidence, and Connection to the Local Job Market

Design and facilitation : Yasmin Farhoumand

15:00-17:00 PM CET



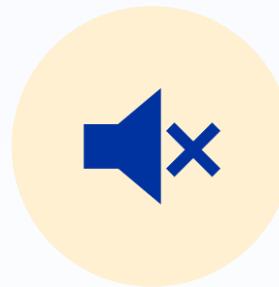
UNITED NATIONS
GENEVA



Zoom - Housekeeping rules



Close down all unnecessary programmes that would slow down your PC



Microphones have been disabled



Chat has been disabled



Use the Q&A function if you want to share any questions/thoughts/comments

Why this initiative

Why Beyond the UN?

- Navigating a period of **increased uncertainty and change**
- Growing interest in **career pathways outside the UN system**
- Strong demand for **clear, practical and factual information**
- Need for **early visibility** into external opportunities
- A **collective, inter-agency commitment** to supporting staff

What this initiative is (and is not)

This initiative is:

- A structures, supportive space to explore external career options
- Focused on information, clarity and awareness
- Designed to connect staff with organisations currently recruiting

This initiative is not:

- A recruitment fair
- A selection or screening process
- A platform for applications and interviews

My professional perspective

- **Psychologist & career counsellor – 25+ years of experience**
- Expertise in:
 - career guidance & transitions
 - employability & skills assessment
 - HR development & training
 - stress regulation & trauma-informed approaches
- Experience bridging:
 - **international organisations (ICRC, UNOG)**
 - **the Swiss labour market**



A perspective grounded in both international careers and local realities.

The Framework Used Today

Why **employability** as a guiding thread

- Since 2020: working within the **federal employability program viamia**
 - Swiss Confederation & Cantons initiative
 - Focused on maintaining and strengthening employability, particularly in the second half of working life
- **For today's webinar:**
 - I use **employability indicators inspired by the viamia framework**
 - As a **navigation tool** to help you:
 - structure your reflection
 - identify priorities
 - move forward in a focused and sustainable way



This framework helps transform complexity into clarity and action.

Purpose & Framing

Purpose of today's webinar

- Help you gain **Direction, Confidence and Connection to the local job market**
- Support a **healthy and sustainable transition from the UN system**
- Share **practical resources** you can use beyond today
- Leave time for **Q&A (20 minutes)**

👉 This webinar focuses on orientation and strategy — not exhaustive training.

What Success Looks Like

At the end of these two hours, this webinar will be successful if:

- You feel **more empowered** to start or reframe your job search
- You are **clearer about what really matters** in the transition process
- You know **where to focus your energy first**
- You leave with **concrete next steps**

👉 *Clarity, focus and direction matter more than doing everything at once.*

What Do We Mean by Employability?

- The ability to **find and keep a job**, to **progress at work**, and to **adapt to change** throughout one's working life.

👉 Employability is not only about **skills**, but about your **overall capacity to position yourself and adapt** in a changing labour market.

Why Employability Matters

Why look at employability now?

- To identify your **strengths and leverage points**
- To clarify **what needs to be reinforced**
- To increase your **capacity to bounce back professionally**
- To avoid **unfocused and exhausting job-search efforts**

👉 *Employability is the main lens used in this webinar to support Direction, Confidence and Connection to the local job market.*

A Simple Framework

How we will look at employability

Employability can be explored through **four key dimensions**:

- To identify your **strengths and leverage points**
- To clarify **what needs to be reinforced**
- To increase your **capacity to bounce back professionally**
- To avoid **unfocused and exhausting job-search efforts**

👉 *Let's now take a few minutes to see where you stand today.*

Employability Self-Assessment (5 minutes)

Quick self-check – Exercise sheet – Part I

- For each of the four dimensions:
 - rate yourself from **1 (fragile)** to **5 (solid)**
- There are **no good or bad scores**
- This is a **personal reflection tool**, not a test

 *Focus on awareness, not judgment*

Why The Psychological Dimension Matters

Career transition is not only technical

- Career change involves **external change**
- But it also triggers an **internal process**

Ignoring this often leads to:

- loss of energy
- confusion
- discouragement
- job-search burnout

👉 *Understanding your psychological position helps you adapt your strategy and pace.*

Change vs Transition

Understanding the difference

According to **William Bridges**:

- **Change**
External, visible, situational
(job ending, relocation, contract change)
- **Transition**
Internal, psychological
(what happens inside you as you adapt)



The Transition Process : Three Main Phases

1 Ending / Letting go

Letting go of roles, identity, familiar reference points

2 Neutral Zone

In-between phase — unclear, unstable, sometimes creative

3 New Beginning

New direction takes shape — renewed energy and commitment

👉 *Each phase calls for **different types of support and action**.*

Quick Self-Check & Grounding

Where am I in my transition?

Take a moment to reflect silently:

- Which phase best describes **where I am today?**
 - Ending • Neutral Zone • New Beginning
- What feels **most challenging** right now?
- What **do I need most** at this stage?
 - clarity • reassurance • rest • structure • support

Grounding & breathing

👉 *Regulating your nervous system supports clearer thinking and better decisions.*

Why the Geneva Job Market Feels Difficult

- No single, consolidated source of labour market data
- Information is fragmented and must be cross-checked
 - Misunderstanding the market often leads to:
 - discouragement
 - loss of energy
 - inefficient strategies



*Understanding the system **reduces uncertainty***

A Highly Competitive & Selective Market

Structural characteristics

- Very high density of **highly qualified profiles**
- Strong **international attractiveness**
- Large number of **cross-border workers**
- Unemployment **structurally higher** than the Swiss average

👉 *Geneva is a **small but extremely competitive** market*

A Formal and Risk-Averse Market

- For generalist roles:
 - **up to 300–600 applications**
- Employers prioritise candidates who:
 - meet **all key criteria**
 - have **recognised diplomas**
 - show **relevant experience in the field**

👉 *Filtering happens **early and strictly***

Open vs Hidden Job Market

Two access routes

Open market

- Advertised jobs
- Job boards, company websites, LinkedIn
- Placement agencies

👉 *Different strategies*

Hidden market

- Network & referrals
- Spontaneous applications
- LinkedIn outreach

👉 *Same requirements: **clarity, focus, targeted approach***

From Understanding to Positioning

Why positioning matters

To position yourself effectively, you need to:

- Clarify **which roles and sectors** make sense for you
- Identify **what is expected** on the market
- Understand **how your profile fits** the Swiss system

Exploring Professions & Skills

A key tool: orientation.ch

- Explore professions linked to your interests
- Identify:
 - required skills
 - qualifications
 - possible career paths
- Compare your profile with **market expectations**



*A powerful tool to **clarify and reality-check** your target*

Understanding the Swiss System

Structure of the Swiss education & training system

<https://www.orientation.ch/dyn/show/2800>

Importance of:

- recognised diplomas - check recognition of your professional qualifications : recognition.swiss
- certifications
- continuing education
- Strong link between qualifications and employability

👉 These tools help you **translate your experience** into a language the Swiss market understands

Job Search: 4 Key Principles

What really makes a difference

An effective job search is:

1. **Informed** – based on real market data
2. **Focused** – limited and coherent targets
3. **Targeted** – adapted to open vs hidden market
4. **Sustainable** – aligned with your energy & transition phase

 *Strategy matters more than volume*

Start with Information, Not Applications

Before applying, ask yourself

- What roles am I really targeting?
- In which sectors and organisations?
- What are the **must-have criteria?**
- Where are these roles mainly accessed?

Practical tip

- Analyse **10–15 job ads** for the same role
- Identify recurring skills, qualifications and keywords

👉 *This becomes your **reference framework***

Focus & Prioritisation

Where to invest your energy

- Limit yourself to:
 - **1-2 priority targets**
 - **1-2 secondary options**
- Decide consciously:
 - what you pursue now
 - what you postpone
- Align effort with:
 - your employability strengths
 - your current energy level



Dispersion is a major cause of job-search burnout

Open vs Hidden Market: How to Act

Two markets – two approaches

Open market

- Very competitive
- Apply only when criteria are largely met
- CV & application must be **highly targeted**

Hidden market

- Networking, referrals, spontaneous applications
- Priorities:
 - mapping contacts
 - intentional outreach
 - clear professional narrative

👉 *Same clarity, different actions*

Before Moving to the CV...

A key question

Before working on your CV, ask yourself:

- Does my CV reflect:
 - what the market is looking for?
 - the roles I am actually targeting?
 - how I want to position myself?

 *This is what we address next*

Why the CV Is So Critical in Switzerland

The CV as a filter

- Often the **first and decisive selection tool**
- Used to quickly assess:
 - fit with the role
 - relevance of experience
 - compliance with expectations

👉 *A non-adapted CV is often eliminated **very early***

Swiss CV: Key Principles

What employers expect

A Swiss CV is generally :

- **Clear, concise and structured** (1–2 pages)
- **Chronological** (most recent first) (*sometimes skills-based, strategically*)
- **Factual and concrete**
- Focused on **relevant experience and added value**

👉 *The goal is **fit and credibility**, not exhaustiveness*

Common Gaps for UN / International Profiles

Typical mismatches

Many international CVs / PHPs:

- are too long, descriptive or generic
- emphasise mandates and context rather than **transferable value**
- use internal language not aligned with the local market

👉 *The issue is rarely lack of experience, but **translation and positioning***

4 Key Principles

What changes

From → To

- Tasks & mandates → **Skills mobilised & added value**
- Internal language → **Market-oriented language**
- Broad experience → **Targeted relevance**
- All competencies → **Only what serves the role**

👉 A good Swiss CV answers one question: **Why should I be interviewed for this role?**

What Recruiters Look for (and Why Adaptation Matters)

First screening criteria

Recruiters typically scan for:

- Relevant experience in a similar role
- Recognised qualifications
- Years of experience in the field
- Key skills matching the job ad
- Coherence between profile and target



*This is why **adaptation of your CV is essential***

From PHP to CV: A Concrete Example

Let's look at a real case

BEFORE : UN PHP

- 14-page administrative profile
- Internal UN career document
- Focus on functions and hierarchy
- Institutional language

AFTER : Executive Swiss CV

- 2-page executive positioning document
- Market-oriented leadership profile
- Focus on impact, culture, and governance
- Business and board-level language

Staying Focused, Energized & Connected

Why regulation and support matter

- Career transition is demanding
- Sustainable progress requires:
 - emotional regulation
 - pacing
 - structure
 - support



You don't have to do this alone

Q&A (20 minutes)

Your questions

- Upvoted questions from participants
- Practical and psychological dimensions welcome

Resources & Next Steps

To support you beyond today

- Career support & guidance services
- Training & upskilling opportunities
- Job search platforms & local resources
- Relevant CTT sessions:
 - *Courage in Career Change*
 - *Resilience from a Career Perspective (I & II)*



All links are included in your resource document

Final Reflection – Exercise part 2

Take a moment to integrate

- My strongest employability dimension today:

- The dimension I need to reinforce first:

- One concrete action I will take in the next two weeks:

👉 *Small, focused steps make a real difference.*
