# “Where am I now?”

## JobBridge Switzerland webinar summary: personal career diagnosis before looking for work in Switzerland

**Expert:** Vira Rodionova, job coach at Ingeus Schweiz, former HR manager and recruiter in Ukraine
**Moderator:** Svitlana Prokopchuk, USB United for Support and Belonging
**Format:** online webinar in Ukrainian, 1.5 hours
**Recording:** the video is available on the JobBridge Switzerland portal and on YouTube

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Looking for work in Switzerland does not start with a CV or with job portals – it starts with an honest answer to the question: where am I now? The introductory webinar (Session 0) of the JobBridge Switzerland programme was devoted to exactly that: self-diagnosis. Job coach Vira Rodionova, who knows the labour market from both the candidate’s and the employer’s side and has gone through the job search in Switzerland herself, showed how to assess your life situation, resources, skills and limitations so that your next step is realistic and successful.

**Important:** a diagnosis is not an assessment. There are no right or wrong answers. You are answering first and foremost for yourself.

## Key points in brief

1. **Integration is a single, interconnected mechanism.** Work brings satisfaction only when the other areas of life – family, children, health, household – are in balance with one another.
2. **Childcare comes before the job search, not after.** The principle “first I’ll find a job, then I’ll organise childcare” does not work in practice.
3. **Without basic needs met, there is no readiness for work.** Sleep, rest and safety are the foundation on which everything else is built.
4. **Resources are always limited.** Tension is the first sign that they are running low; stress is the signal to stop.
5. **Know yourself.** Hiring is a “sales” process, and to offer yourself to an employer you need to know your strengths well.
6. **Be honest about limitations.** Working hours, location, qualifications and language that are not considered in advance often lead to a contract being terminated during the probation period.
7. **Language level is not the most important thing – real communication is.** Yet without the language, your experience is like an account you cannot access.
8. **Looking for work is work too.** It needs a system, a schedule and a careful use of your energy.

## 1. Look at your life as a whole

Vira Rodionova suggests seeing integration as your overall life situation, in which each area affects the others. Divide your life into several areas: family; children and childcare (Kinderbetreuung); personal

well-being – mental and physical health; household; social circle; learning and language; professional future.

### Exercise: "What needs the most attention right now?"

For each area that matters to you, complete the following in writing:

1. "Right now, the thing in my life that needs the most attention is…"
2. What would I like to add or change in this area?
3. What resources do I already have for this?
4. How exactly will I do it?

The expert's example: your household is missing a chair. Options: get one as a gift, buy one (at what price?), go to a garage sale. Each area is worked through in the same way, step by step. **Write or draw:** thoughts in your head are quickly forgotten, while what is written down "sticks", builds confidence and lets you return to your analysis later.

### Tool: the Kanban board

Divide all your tasks into three columns: "planned", "in progress", "done". Move tasks between the columns as you make progress. When the "done" column fills up, praise yourself – this gives your motivation a real boost.

## 2. Assess your resources

An obstacle – and finding a job in a new country certainly is one – can only be overcome if we sense where our resources run out. Every resource is limited, so it is worth treating each one with care and being clear about what exactly you are spending it on.

**How can you tell your resources are running low?** The first sign is inner tension at the thought that you have to do something. If the tension turns into stress, you need to stop.

### Maslow's pyramid and the traffic-light principle

The expert uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a basis: physiological needs → safety → social needs → esteem and recognition → self-actualisation. As long as the two lowest levels are not met, there is no point talking about readiness for work.

Rate each area with a traffic-light colour. For example, sleep:

| Colour | What it means | Example: sleep | What to do |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Green** | Resources available | Good-quality sleep, you feel rested and have a plan for the day | Maintain |
| **Yellow** | Limited resources | You wake up at night or take a long time to fall asleep | Look for ways to recover |
| **Red** | Support needed | You cannot sleep at night at all | Seek help, including from professionals |

### Daily routine: the 1–1–1 rule

Resources are restored through routine. Like a school timetable, plan every day:

1. **1 “lesson” for yourself** – rest and recovery;
2. **1 “lesson” for integration and language;**
3. **1 “lesson” for your professional future** – for example, an hour reading job descriptions instead of scrolling social media.

## 3. Map your support network

In another country it is easy to feel completely alone. But you are not: there are people around you, and it is worth making this visible. Write down groups of contacts and, under each one, names and the questions you could bring to these people:

1. **Personal contacts:** family, partner, friends, acquaintances, relatives.
2. **Professional contacts:** colleagues from previous jobs, new acquaintances from seminars and events, local professionals in your field.
3. **Practical support:** social workers and other services.
4. **Learning:** courses, language schools, further training programmes.

Separately, consider which group gives you energy and which drains it. Any professional advice is support; with family and friends, it all depends on the relationship.

**When the family does not agree.** Sometimes one partner wants to work while the other prefers to stay on social assistance. The expert recommends turning to a therapist or coach: in Switzerland, which she describes as a liberal-capitalist rather than a welfare-oriented country, people feel good (German “wohl”) when they support themselves.

**Learning is for life.** In a new country there is no way around new skills and language. As the moderator recalled, citing Adrian Gerber (SEM), a diploma is not decisive: what will work for you is flexibility, continuous learning and contact with people.

## 4. Identify your skills, interests and values

### The “Work” association test

If you are not quite sure why you want to work and what kind of work it should be, try a simple association test based on Jung:

1. Write the word “work” and find 16 associations for it (each no more than two words).
2. Combine the associations in pairs, finding a new association for each pair – you will get 8.
3. Repeat: 8 → 4 → 2 → 1.
4. The final association shows what work means to you on a subconscious level. The results are often surprising.

### Taking stock of your strengths

Answer these questions in writing:

1. What have I done in my career, and what did I do best?
2. What other fields or types of work interest me?
3. What are my hobbies, and what can I do outside work and household tasks?

4. What are my favourite skills?
5. What am I proud of?
6. What do others value in me? (You can simply ask the people close to you.)

**The bingo effect:** skills that come up two, three or four times in your answers are your competitive advantage on the labour market.

### How to turn experience into competencies

Rephrase what you have done in the employer's language. For example: "organised the team's work" → coordination, organisation, planning; "explained complex matters to clients" → strong communication skills. With a list of competencies, you can ask an AI tool to suggest professions that match them. Search for vacancies not only by job title but also by skills: job titles in Switzerland are often unexpected.

**A hobby as a profession?** Skills are transferable: someone who has created a beautiful garden, even on a balcony, may find their place as a florist. But decide honestly whether you want to earn money from your hobby: if it restores your energy, turning it into work may take that energy away.

## 5. Assess conditions and limitations honestly

Limitations are not a final verdict but factors to take into account. Some are easy to overcome; others cannot be changed under current circumstances. Rate each one using the traffic-light principle and decide whether you have the resources to overcome it.

1. **Working hours.** Night work without prior experience is a big risk at a mature age: several of the expert's clients did not get through the probation period because of it. When you are young, you can try it to gain experience.
2. **Location.** Especially for single parents: if something happens at school, you need to be able to get there in time. Calculate the real travel time.
3. **Qualifications.** Switzerland has regulated and non-regulated professions. Information is available on government websites; find out whether your profession is regulated and where to submit your diploma for recognition. A separate JobBridge webinar will be devoted to diploma recognition.
4. **Taxes.** Pay attention to the canton where the employer is registered and to the withholding tax (Quellensteuer) at your place of residence.
5. **Family circumstances.** Discuss within the family who takes on which role when someone starts working.

**Look for "open doors" too:** if your town has poor public transport connections, it may make sense to move once you have found a job; if your language is at the "yellow" level, one or two steps will take it into the "green" zone.

## 6. Language: what really matters

Without the language, even a highly qualified professional is like a rich person whose accounts are frozen: the experience is there, but it cannot be used. While Ukrainians were initially hired with English only, or even with no local language at all, employers now increasingly expect knowledge of the local language.

At the same time, the levels A2, B2 or C1 are a rough guide. The expert knows people at A2 level who communicated very well, and people with a higher-level certificate who could not speak. So decide for yourself:

1. Which language, and in what form, is needed in the job you want: spoken, written, listening comprehension?
2. Do you need professional vocabulary (berufliche Sprache)?
3. Do I understand work instructions? Can I explain a task to others, or explain why I did something the way I did?

## 7. Compare your experience with the market

Study job descriptions and compare them with your experience, marking each position green, yellow or red. If you lack experience, Switzerland has a well-developed system for this – and not only for young people: work placements within integration programmes, internships, volunteering, freelancing and one-off jobs. If you do have experience, it needs to be "packaged" well and offered to the employer.

Sometimes your competencies will allow you to work very successfully in Switzerland in a different position from the one you held in Ukraine. It pays to look more broadly.

## 8. Looking for work is work too

The job search involves many mechanical, repetitive tasks, so you need your own system: decide on relevant platforms, ways of submitting applications and how you will use your energy.

1. **"Vitamin B" (Beziehungen).** Connections work very well in Switzerland. Do not avoid new contacts – but remember that a recommendation also places responsibility on the person who gives it.
2. **Advice.** Find out where, and from which institutions, you can get support. Some coaching companies work on referral from the authorities supporting you, including online for other cantons.

### Action map and SMART goals

The final tool is the action map:

1. Identify your current priority: work, supporting your children's integration, or something else.
2. Assess what resources you have for it.
3. Formulate three concrete steps you can take.

To define the steps, turn a wish into a goal: not "I want to work", but "what kind of work exactly do I want?". Formulate your goal using the SMART method – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound. The goal "work one day a week and earn a full week's salary" unfortunately does not meet these criteria.

## Questions and answers

**I have already sent 40 applications with no result. Where do I start?** It all depends on the field. In IT, 40 applications are not yet meaningful; it is worth reflecting after thousands. In retail, 200–500 applications may be the signal to analyse. Start the analysis with your documents: your CV should

immediately show why you are worth inviting to an interview. If the positions differ significantly, tailor your documents to each one. Also check whether your tasks in Ukraine match what is required here.

**What can I do if an employer doubts my Ukrainian education?** The expert told how an employer questioned her about a cook with vocational-college training almost item by item through the curriculum. In such cases, direct contact with the employer and a trial day help, so that the person can demonstrate their skills in practice.

**Which strengths do candidates most often overlook?** People underestimate how much they can do. The simplest way to find out is to ask those close to you what they value in you, and to look at skills that can be transferred to a new profession.

## Summary: where to start this week

- ☐ Organise or plan childcare.
- ☐ Assess your basic needs (sleep, rest, safety) using the traffic-light principle.
- ☐ Introduce the daily 1–1–1 rule.
- ☐ Draw a map of your support network.
- ☐ Take the “Work” association test and make a list of your strengths.
- ☐ Complete the self-diagnosis on the JobBridge Switzerland portal.
- ☐ Check whether your profession is regulated in Switzerland.
- ☐ Formulate one SMART goal and the first three steps towards it.

**“You are the main resource for achieving your goal,”** Vira Rodionova reminded participants at the end. And moderator Svitlana Prokopchuk added: we provide the information, but how you use it is up to you – you play the leading role in your own life.

## What’s next

**The next webinar** is devoted to labour law and working with S status. A video interview with the SEM press spokesperson on the latest changes will also be published soon.

The JobBridge Switzerland programme comprises 14 webinars: core topics (labour law, cantonal systems, working with the RAV, CVs and cover letters, job search, diploma recognition, workplace culture, further education) and thematic sessions on five career paths: IT and digital technologies; healthcare and care; hospitality and services; technical professions; entrepreneurship.

**Materials and contacts.** The webinar recording, presentation and exercises are available on the JobBridge Switzerland portal (jobbridge.usb.ngo). You can leave questions under the video – we will address them in upcoming webinars. We would be grateful for your feedback via the feedback form.

*The JobBridge Switzerland programme is free of charge for participants and is implemented by USB – United for Support and Belonging with financial support from the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).*