

CareersNet – Policy trends 2017-19

Introduction

CareersNet experts have performed an update of Cedefop's records on lifelong systems and practices for the reference period of 2017-18. The inventory is structured in line with the 2008 Resolution and the EU guidelines for lifelong guidance systems development. This document provides an overview of emerging trends in what regards policy priorities, methodologies, tools and provisions to diverse target groups. This information provides highlights rather than an exhaustive account of developments across the EU, which would require deeper analysis of records. Please note that cases highlighted provide illustrations of trends, rather than a role model to follow.

Emerging trends

National policy coordination and cooperation mechanisms for LLG tend not to be guidance specific. While a great effort has been done by a considerable number of Member States (MS) under the auspices of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) to establish national guidance forums, many have phased out or acquired a different character. In many cases forums have been disbanded or been absorbed by the agendas of other policy fields. Most frequently this mutation has been in the direction of becoming networks which support activation, employment or upskilling policies (linked to next point). Currently functioning guidance forums tend a common set of success factors which include: clear political commitment, role and assigned resources; a high level of engagement of social partners in the forum, particularly employers; good representation at local/regional level.

Notable case: Finland

The development, design and implementation of guidance services is co-ordinated by 15 regional authorities, ELY Centres (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment) which all have established regional lifelong guidance forums. The quality assurance of the LLG provision is one of the tasks given to the ELY Centres. This work of the regional working group is co-ordinated by the above mentioned governmentally designated National Lifelong Guidance Working group. This group has the mandate from both the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

National skills strategies provide a nexus for sustainability and policy relevance of guidance provision. Guidance has traditionally been a component of the support provided in education, but not a stable component of lifelong learning. The current emergence of national skills strategies (may have other denominations) and flexible pathways for the development of adults' skills/learning are transforming guidance into a technical requirement of training and activation policies. This movement is also encouraged at EU level and there is a clear indication that this may consolidate permanent interventions and budgetary items in public employment services (PES) and vocational education and training (VET). This tendency is also providing a rationale for coordination of services and cooperation between stakeholders, especially at regional and local level.

Notable case: Italy

Upskilling through Public Employment Services (PES) (<http://www.agenzialavoro.emr.it/>) is a regionally managed based programme for the labour market reengagement of unemployed and low skilled. It includes profiling of potential participants (i.e. creation of a portfolio), subscription to a personalised service agreement, and career guidance activities ranging from career information to personalised support. The programme leads to training opportunities towards a qualification or the enrolment in activation interventions, internships and validation of skills. Individual portfolios are integrated in institutional databases and updated whenever necessary, support participants' progress. Approach is individual-centred and specific actions are determined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the needs of the participants.

See also adult and lifelong learning in NL and FR.

Municipalities and local offices of PES are acquiring increasing importance in coordinating the efforts of guidance stakeholders. Due to the increasing relevance of networked strategies for adult upskilling and youth early school leaving these organisations tend to play a local coordination role. Their pre-existing administrative capacity, stable financial and physical resources and established networks make them obvious options for the local and regional management of funds, staff and participants/beneficiaries' processes. They play, in many MS, key roles in outreach strategies and coordination between guidance and other services, such as validation of skills, flexible training offer and enterprise based career learning activities. Increasingly they also play a role in hosting and promoting community oriented spaces for career development.

Notable case: Latvia

Local offices of the Latvian public employment service SEA have the responsibility to coordinate the efforts of local stakeholders to provide learning and employment solutions to adults. These offices support one of the most comprehensive services provided in the EU to adults, including outreach, career guidance, work experience and flexible training leading to qualifications.

National coordination retains an important role despite the growing importance of the local dimension. The most successful experiences demonstrate that growing autonomy is more successful with strong national level steering and support. Services and initiatives can be coordinated locally, but work better if standards, monitoring, technical support and quality control are provided/defined at central level. In some cases, local and regional strategies have been implemented by coordinating essentially public services and, in others, using a mix of public services with contracted private provision. In both cases there is a pressure to have standards of service provision, monitoring and outcomes, as well as to have a framework which harmonises information, handling of caseload, referrals, methods and digital tools.

Notable cases: NL, LV, FI, FR

New spaces for career learning and support are emerging at local and regional level with a logic of open access to the community. While their rationale might differ, spaces where both youth and adults can obtain information about occupations, economic activities and learning solutions are on the rise. They generally gather official representations of relevant stakeholders for youth and adult learning such as PES, municipal services, social security, employers, youth services, training

providers, education offices, health services, police, among others. When oriented for youth, they tend to focus on providing career information, prevention of educational disengagement, supporting vocational choice and enabling direct contact with professionals and first hand experience/simulation of occupational realities. When oriented to adult, focus tends to be on activation, motivation, information on re-skilling and upskilling solutions, professional networking, advocacy and holistic support.

Notable cases: The Netherlands, Belgium

The Dutch LeerWerkLoketten (Learning and Working Desks) are regional offices supported by a network of educational institutions, businesses, municipalities, knowledge centres and the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV). They are open to all citizens looking to get free advice on learning and working opportunities and employers with labour-related questions. They screen clients, provide guidance activities, validation services, support activities, education and training.

In Belgium, the 'Maisons de l'Emploi' are local based structures, in partnership with towns and communes. They can offer to jobseekers a personalised support in collaboration with local socio-economical actors. They also collaborate with local actors : "agences locales pour l'emploi "(ALE) , "agences de développement local (ADL) , non-governmental associations working in training and professional integration, adult education, and Missions regionales pour l'emploi (MIRE). Workshops and information sessions are organised in collaboration with partners. Jobseekers can also have personal meetings with a counsellor.

See also DK, FI, BE

The growth of outreach represents an important challenge for passive, "open door" guidance services. There are several countries, especially in Northern and Central Europe, which have taken vigorous steps towards reaching out to inactive and marginalised people, as well as refugees and third country migrants. Outreach is very intimately connected with career support and case managers can be guidance practitioners. As much as this is an exciting development for guidance it requires that guidance staff works in larger, multidisciplinary teams, with an active stance in contacting motivating and engaging people in careers and learning. The holistic logic of most of these services further implies that participants are supported in psychological, health, housing and other issues, which may not normally be part of standard career support.

Notable cases: Sweden, Norway

Swedish youth services in the Stockholm region make extensive use of street work and peer-to-peer contact. Guidance services are well coordinated with health services, psychological support and social security to deal with cases of addiction, marginality, deprivation and economic disadvantage. A community based service in Norway is linked to municipal outreach, providing a sheltered reactivation environment for adults, which works on stepwise motivational work and career management skills development.

Services to refugees and third country migrants have had a strong development in the last few years. This development has nevertheless been very uneven across the EU. Some countries have relaxed requirements for access of asylum seekers to career development services, training and even workplace experience. The underlying logic is that people need to be ready to (re)engage in learning and employment either in their host country or upon return to their country of origin. The prolonged nature of the Syrian conflict has stimulated countries such as **Germany and Sweden** to redirect their efforts from short term support to long term integration, career development and secondary movement mobility. Support has therefore become wider in scope, with holistic concerns and requiring stronger coordination between public services in charge of frontier management, employment and training policies. While humanitarian migrants enjoy a special status, the growing concern with the development of complementary pathways to integration has generated synergies with services aimed at “economic” third country migrants.

Quality assurance in guidance remains patchy and is not homogeneous across the EU. The definition of occupational profiles or standards for the initial training of practitioners seems to be the main mechanism to assure the quality of guidance services. Many countries nevertheless, do not have requirements at this level. The ones which do may have more than one national standard and there is very little consistency across MS. The absence of standardised monitoring of inputs, processes and outcomes in the vast majority of MS does not allow for consistent assessment and evaluation of resource usage and results. In the absence of these, there is rarely a solid policy rationale for the sustainability and improvement of services. National accountability of services remains an equally fuzzy matter.

Notable case: Estonia

In Estonia there are occupational qualification standards for career specialists (EQF level 6 and 7). The Association of Estonian Career Counsellors is the organisation responsible for awarding occupational qualifications. Employers are required to provide continuing training based on the competency requirements of the qualification standards. In guidance services quality assurance is based on client feedback, assessment of conformity with established procedures and studies on effects of the service.

The frequency and scope of outcomes measures indicates that the lack of monitoring is partly motivated by resistance of the career guidance community itself. This is apparently due to the belief (grounded or not) that monitoring will make a black box out of methods and soft outcomes. Notwithstanding this argument, the current situation is nevertheless not the most desirable – governments tend to support guidance services based on ideology or personal belief of government officials, not providing the basis for stable development. It is visible that in many countries there is space for monitoring based on short term perceptions of service by clients but rarely on understanding its results. Greater participation of practitioners in the development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation outcomes in education and employment is likely to be an important step to be taken.

The rise of personal career development plans in lifelong learning is having a lasting effect over guidance support. Personal career development plans are currently being introduced as soon as basic education and becoming the key organising element of flexible learning pathways for adults. This represents a potential paradigm shift from vertical organisation of learning around

administrative division by policy field (e.g. education, employment) to cross service and cross level management of individual cases. While currently centred on provisions to vulnerable groups, this is proving to be an opportunity for the development of technical solutions for system integration.

Individual portfolios are growingly key elements in enabling system integration and individual empowerment. Portfolios provide the typical support to the development of personal plans and are associated with the growth of online career support. The range of portfolio instruments is nevertheless wide and its status equally diverse across the EU. In some cases it is merely a self-developed repository of results of self-assessment exercises, occupational preferences and learning “episodes”. In its most developed version it is a support tool developed in conjunction with professional practitioners and other relevant professionals. It can register the career history of the individual, relevant assessment results, validated achievements, career goals, plans and specific actions to develop. It can have an official status, supporting referrals across services and validation processes leading to certification.

Notable example: Belgium (FL)

The Flemish PES (VDAB) offers the online system “Mijn loopbaan” - “My Career”, which allows users to make a fully personalised online portfolio. This portfolio allows them to keep track of their competences and qualifications, create their CV and upload it to an online platform used by employers. The system is connected to the job vacancy database and uses sophisticated matching techniques (e.g. based on competences). “Mijn loopbaan” can also be used to search for multiple types of education and training opportunities.

Training and career vouchers, personal learning accounts and training credits represent accomplished examples of the increasing trend to define career support as an individual right. Both types of individual incentives tend to be grounded on legislation linked to the right to learn and have a decent job. They embody fundamental social and welfare principles and have the singular characteristic of acting as enablers, conferring rights of access, without necessarily overhauling logics of provision of training. One of the most important aspects is that these mechanisms tend to make guidance support a standard feature of learning and employability measures. As such they also push innovation by introducing portfolios and quality standards (procedures, tools, practitioners’ competences), to be adopted both by public and externally contracted services.

Notable case: France

The CFP - Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal training account) enables grants all working age people training rights which can be used to acquire training in certified providers. The CPF is credited in euros. Access to the CFP can and will be (for vulnerable adults) supported by a Conseil en Évolution professionnel (CEP), or career development advisory process. The CEP is a free and personalised career support system.

Career learning in schools is on the rise. Infusion of career themes in subjects and introduction of compulsory or elective courses in both basic and secondary education is a clear trend. One of the most interesting aspects of the intensification of career learning in schools is the increased cooperation with potential employers and their associations. Either directly in school or through

cooperation with local career centres, pupils have increasingly more access to contact with professionals, occupations, work simulations, job shadowing possibilities, work experience programmes. On occasion this trend is consolidated in a career education framework, with a typology of career management skills and learning outcomes.

This trend affects both general and vocational tracks and is part of a larger tendency to increase the proximity between both types of education and training. Effects can growingly be felt in the way academic departments and teachers cooperate with school practitioners, PES and other career centres. This more clearly visible on the prevention of early school leaving and promotion of the employability of vocational training finalists.

Notable case: Finland

Career education is a compulsory element in school curriculum of both basic and upper secondary education. It includes scheduled activities in students' timetables, individual guidance, group counselling, and work-experience periods. Guidance services are provided by school counsellors in co-operation with group-advisers and teachers are expected to instruct their students in study skills in particular.

Guidance services are quickly stepping up the pace in the adoption of digital technologies, although with still unclear efficacy. The most visible effects are on delivery of support in the form of interactive career information on occupations, learning options, validation and recognition of competences/knowledge. Growingly there is an emergence of online self-directed assessments which lead to the identification of skills, preferences and attitudes, with the possibility of storing results in a personal portfolio. Many of these services are relatively static and do not provide access to further support. The trend is, nevertheless, that online services do not stand alone and are inscribed in a logic of multi-channelling, allowing users to also use other online tools (e.g. chat, email) and channels (telephone, face-to-face, SMS) to have access to information, advice and counselling support. In some cases, multi-channelled services are supported by progressive, individualised screening associated with tiers of service intensity.

Adaption of attitudes of both practitioners and managers to a new service logic is sluggish and appropriate training on ICT (and also LMI) integration is still not common. Most successful cases have relied on a carefully designed strategy to reform and update the services. While popular with users chat services and peer exchange forums are still not a rule across the EU. Many public services are hesitant to promote these initiatives due to fears of excessive exposure of both practitioners and users.

Many public services have associated matching engines with web-sites providing careers information and self-assessment exercises, linking personal profiles with vacancies and training offers. The effectiveness of these mechanisms seems to be linked to both the existence of professional support to the users of the service and the cooperation of potential employers in the production of the career information. In what concerns this last aspect, while national statistics can provide the basis for the understanding of labour market trends, employers' cooperation is fundamental to understand occupational local realities and their possible futures.

Data mining and artificial intelligence hold great promise, but they are still limited by the quality of vacancy data available and the ability to employ experimental AIs, beyond simple matching algorithms in open social environment. This seems to be an area which will have significant results in the medium term, but which requires significant national background effort and investment. Due to its more limited scope, AI supported gaming and career oriented edutainment appear to hold a stronger short term potential, but are also still in an experimental stage.

Notable case: Denmark

The eGuidance service in Denmark provides a multi-channel career support via online information, chat, telephone and face-to-face service. Individual needs are progressively assessed as clients engage with the service, which can be escalated at any point, if practitioners deem it necessary. The service has a highly structured intervention logic, detailed case-management and a highly trained and flexible staff.