Developing national career development support systems

Pathways to enhance lifelong career guidance, career education and career development support for workers
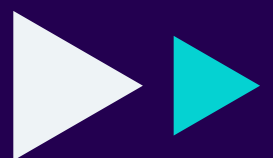
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▶ **Abstract**

Career development support comprises activities such as career guidance, careers education and staff development for workers. Career development support is key to the implementation of lifelong learning, active labour market policies and instrumental to successfully achieve social and economic targets. In the face of mounting challenges brought by global trends in technology, demography and environment, career development support has become more important than ever. This publication constitutes a joint effort by the European Training Foundation and the International Labour Organization to support countries in the process of enhancing their national career development support systems. Departing from the results of previous international initiatives, it provides a framework to develop system reviews and promote consensus around the definition of a national vision and planning. The specificities of low and middle-income countries are discussed, as well as the potential and limitations of digital technologies.

▶ About the authors

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Defining Career Development Support

▶ Introduction[1]
Defining Career Development Support

Career development support encompass a number of activities which provide support to individuals in achieving successful and fulfilling careers. They are essential in achieving balance between personal objectives linked to living a happy, secure and accomplished life and growth oriented objectives linked to talent management, productivity and innovation. Career development support is key for success in learning for both young pupils and adults who wish to upskill or retrain. It enables effective career transitions, for individuals in their early, mid and late career. It empowers vulnerable individuals to do livelihood planning, be entrepreneurial and develop sustainable businesses. It is also instrumental in promoting skills utilisation and human resource management in enterprise environments, promoting productivity and innovation. It is an important component in recognition of prior learning (RPL), playing a fundamental role in bridging informal and non-formal learning with successful acquisition of qualifications.

Managing learning, work, leisure, learning and work transitions is a dynamic, complex and context-specific process influenced by many personal and social factors. Digital transformation, globalisation, demographic change, climate change and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic make decisions about learning and work more complex. Individuals are challenged to deal with more frequent and complex transitions within and between education and work, increasing the need for national career development support systems. Such support systems cover a wide variety of services and activities, which is the scope of this paper, namely:

▶ Career guidance: services intended to support individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (career management skills). Career guidance and counselling can include a wide range of activities, such as skills assessments, advice, information, development of job search skills, mentoring, counselling, networking, job placement among others and be delivered face-to-face, at a distance or in a blended setting. Delivery contexts include public and private employment services, career guidance in schools, TVET providers, municipalities, youth centres, social security centres, NGOs, as well as career development support in apprenticeships and work-based environments. Career guidance services may acquire particular importance for vulnerable individuals or groups adopting specialised approaches, methodologies and tools to address their specific needs.

▶ Career education: well organised and structured learning activities offered by schools, public employment services, NGOs, social partners, universities or community based services aimed at developing individuals' career management skills, covering self-learning, building of capacities to identify and interpret labour market information as well as learning and career opportunities, make learning and career decisions, plans and act upon them. Often, career education follows a programmed and gradual approach to skill development, reflecting a curriculum, and relying on a mix of classroom activities, networking with professionals and work experience or community service opportunities.

▶ Career development support for the formally employed: for traditional employees in the formal economy, this refers to human resource management activities aimed at developing career management skills of employees, with the purpose of supporting individual skill development and training, skills utilisation, productivity, innovation and

smart specialisation, and promoting strategic staff planning and development. It frequently relies on activities such as career talks, assessments, establishment of personal plans but also includes enabling a company environment for lifelong learning.

▶ Career development support for workers in the informal economy: The informal economy comprises more than half of the global labour force and more than 90% of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) worldwide. Many individuals working in the informal economy are unaware of the possibilities they may have to access qualifications, decent work and benefit from social protection. This is also the case of many rural populations and individuals performing domestic work, particularly women. Outreach initiatives and partnerships that mobilize national, sectoral and local actors, are key to meet the needs of these workers. Given the large number of Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) with limited resources for this task, the role of social partners is to be leveraged to support MSMEs inter alia by providing skills needs assessments and forecasting (for sectors), facilitating cooperation with adult learning and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions for continuous professional development, also tapping into formalisation of non-formal and informal learning at the workplace and the recognition of prior learning.

▶ Services to the self-employed: With the changing nature of work, including less standard company contexts, and increasing independent employment (freelancing, contract work, platform work), and the related internationalisation of work and education, services are needed for a growing group of self-employed. These services, still not well defined in many countries, tend to integrate or coordinate learning incentives, financial and business counselling and career guidance.

Aims and objectives

The current working paper is a joint effort of the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to provide a rationale for national and international organisations, as well as donors, to give priority to measures that strengthen national career development support systems. It discusses why and how lifelong career guidance, career education and career development support for workers in the formal and informal economy should and can be developed at national, regional and local level. More concretely, the paper debates how public authorities in cooperation with strategic partners can address challenges to key elements of such support systems, being coordination of services, funding, quality of career development support, access to services and the good use of technology. To this end the paper discusses pathways for the development of high quality services.

Specific objectives of this working paper are:

▶ providing an entry point for deep policy dialogue on career development support systems;

▶ proposing a process for national system development rooted in national reviews for evidence-based action planning;

▶ preparing the ground for system development in close partnership between national, regional, local, international, private and public stakeholders across policy areas.

The paper draws strongly from past experience, namely the series of career guidance system reviews undertaken between 2001-2010 by the OECD, ETF, Cedefop and the World Bank, as well as the ongoing monitoring exercise developed by Cedefop's network of experts, CareersNet, the ETF career guidance factsheets in 2020-21 and ILO career development systems reviews 2020-21. Lessons from these experiences are drawn, with the explicit objective to develop an approach which is context sensitive and responds to specific national needs, particularly in low and middle income countries (LMICs). As will be discussed ahead, LMICs tend to face

specific challenges which deeply affect the priorities of system development, such as, for example high population growth, high degrees of informal employment, large shares of rural population and high female inactivity rates.

The geographic scope of this paper is defined by the countries ETF is mandated to cooperate with, covering the European Union (EU) neighbouring countries and Central Asia, as well as ILO Member States. Both the ETF and the ILO have strong mandates in this area and a need to respond to challenges faced by countries. As the United Nations only tripartite organisation, the ILO is mandated by the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88) and by the Human Resources Development Convention of 1975 (No. 142), that states that member States shall adopt and develop comprehensive and co-ordinated policies and programmes of vocational guidance. This call for action is reinforced by the Human Resources Development Recommendation (R 195), that explicitly encourages Member States to ensure provision of vocational, labour market and career information and guidance and employment counselling, supplemented by information on the rights and obligations of all concerned. Career development activities are also key to achieve ILO's core mission and objectives as set out in its Centenary Declaration, namely: individual self-fulfilment, responsiveness of training to labour market needs, enhancing workers' capacity to make choices and seize opportunities, support transitions, achieving gender equality and enabling entrepreneurship.

As the European Union agency that supports the EU as a global actor in the human capital development field, the ETF provides policy advice and support to EU neighbouring countries and Central Asia and to European Commission services and EU Delegations on the reform of education, training and employment policies and systems to provide opportunities for people to improve their life chances. The European Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (2008) gives a direct mandate to the ETF to "Foster the development of lifelong guidance in third countries in accordance with the four priority areas outlined in this Resolution[...]", being "1. Encourage the lifelong acquisition of career management skills; 2. Facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services; 3. Develop the quality assurance of guidance provision; 4. Encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders." This mandate is reinforced through the renewed European Skills Agenda, the Council recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the reinforced Youth Guarantee.

The critical role of career development support

International evidence has highlighted a number of challenges (OECD, 2004a; Sultana & Watts, 2006; Watts 2014) associated with developing career development support systems that deliver the desired impact, such as weak and limited access for vulnerable social groups, lack of funding, low quality of tools, methodologies and labour market intelligence, low cooperation and coordination across ministries, services and stakeholders, and non-professionalised services and weak continuous professional training offer for practitioners. In LMICs the challenges tend to be greater due to lower funding and weaker coordination and governance arrangements, while larger informal sectors and large numbers of youth, alongside larger rural populations, and internally displaced people increase the need to outreach to develop livelihood planning. Finally, women in LMICs often face difficulties in accessing services due to strict adherence to traditional roles in their families and communities (ILO, 2006).

While career development support may have distinct priorities and characteristics in higher and lower income countries, there is an international convergence in its changing role. From an activity focused on helping individuals making educational choices in specific moments, it has moved onto empowering individuals to construct their careers along their life course,

potentially increasing their sense of accomplishment as well as their economic, social and political contribution to society (ILO, 2006). Evidence shows how important exposure to career development support from early mandatory education through adulthood onwards is, benefitting individuals, families, communities, organisations and the society overall through impacts on educational, economic and employment, as well as social outcomes (see Hooley, 2014). The same evidence emphasizes the strong role career development support can play in enhancing individuals' skills in managing learning, work, leisure, as well as learning and work transitions over a lifetime. While global developments are intensifying existing challenges and adding new ones, career development support activities can play an important, multiple role in the context of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the digital and green transitions:

▶ Supporting individuals in their efforts to train, retrain, find new jobs and develop new businesses in a scenario of uncertainty, but filled with new opportunities;

▶ Complementing social protection schemes through career development support as key tool, activating unemployed and inactive, developing outreach, promoting reconversion and entrepreneurship as well as developing livelihood planning capacity in vulnerable areas/populations thereby creating benefits at institutional and community level;

▶ Supporting individuals to develop employability skills, access labour market information, undertake assessment and recognition of prior learning (RPL), build personal portfolios, access digital certificates and matching platforms (jobs, youth work exposure, apprenticeships and internships) and enabling autonomous digital learning through the provision of multi-channelled career development support by making the best of digital technologies that also allow for utilizing blended solutions;

▶ Supporting transitions of thousands of workers in the informal economy into formal work, by acquiring professional qualifications and entrepreneurship skills;

▶ Empowering women across the world to seize professional opportunities created by new occupations, combating gender stereotypes and helping forge the values of a new generation;

▶ Supporting a job-rich sector/supply chain restructuring and enterprise reconversion by facilitating training, retraining, staff reorganisation and redeployment towards diversification of production, reorganisation of workplaces, innovation and sustainability;

▶ Facilitating reintegration of returning migrants through career development support for job search and skills development, identification of skills towards RPL, and entrepreneurship training.
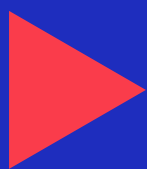
1 ▶ Understanding national systems: shared challenges but very different contexts

▶ 1. Understanding national systems: shared challenges but very different contexts

1.1. Lessons from international review processes

Policy interest in career guidance activities has emerged from a series of international reviews which examined career guidance as a strategy and a practical measure that could foster skills development and lifelong learning for all. The first step was a global OECD 14-country career guidance review in 2000 (OECD 2004a). Parallel reviews using the same or slightly modified instruments were carried out by the European Training Foundation (Sultana 2003), The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training, CEDEFOP (Sultana 2004), and the World Bank (Watts and Fretwell 2004). A further review, commissioned by the European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, using a different survey instrument focused on guidance in Public Employment Service (PES) settings across Europe (Sultana and Watts 2006). Later, ETF has done some related work in the countries of Central Asia and the former Soviet Union (Zelloth 2009).

A common goal for these reviews was to enable the participating countries to benchmark their progress in the career guidance practice and policy development against other comparable countries, and to share good practice and promote mutual policy learning. The review processes included completion of a country questionnaire, a country visit and a country note. The country note acted as a catalyst for national system improvement, highlighting strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations for further improvements. By the end of 2010, these career guidance reviews covered 55 countries, including 4 LMICs (Watts 2014).

The reviews demonstrated common challenges for the participating countries:

▶ Despite good practices, no country had yet developed an adequate lifelong career guidance system;

▶ While ICT-based career services existed in many countries, the success of these provisions varied significantly from country to country (see also Kettunen and Sampson 2019);

▶ The importance and utility of career guidance was generally acknowledged, but countries were in different stages in developing a monitoring and evaluation evidence base for career guidance practice and policy development (Watts 2014).

Besides highlighting shared challenges, the reviews also generated a number of insights onto pathways for national system development. Watts (2014) provides a good summary of the lessons learned from the reviews:

▶ Common understanding of key features of a national career guidance system was developed amongst countries

▶ Need for seamless service provision from lifelong perspective of the individual

▶ The career services need to be customised to meet local conditions

▶ Need to link career guidance to wider education and labour market goals

▶ Acknowledgement of career guidance both as private and public good

▶ Enhancement of cooperation through representative structures

▶ Need to develop more sustainable evidence base for practice and policy development

A key finding in all reviews was a relatively similar definition of career guidance activities, underlining a paradigm shift from intervention at key points in an individual's life to a lifelong

perspective. This shift also moved the emphasis from the provision of external expert support, to the role of the individual developing career adaptability and career management skills. While this shift emphasises individual empowerment, it runs parallel to an increased emphasis on individual responsibility that must be carefully weighted and understood. Critical voices (Sultana, 2012, 2018; see also Ball 2008) have signalled that the reviews tell a cautionary tale about the danger of fully shifting the weight of individual and social welfare to the individual, "responsabilisation", at the expense of social responsibility of private organisations and the nurturing role of the State. The same perspective encourages to see career development support as route not only for the development of individual employability, but also a tool to empower communities, addressing contextual challenges.

The reviews focused on the interface between career guidance practices and public policy. In most countries, the career guidance services are mostly publicly funded and represent both public and private good. The policy rationale for career guidance services includes learning aims, labour market aims and social aims. All these goals are connected to lifelong learning, linked to active labour market policies and the concept of sustaining employability (Watts 2014), but the balance between and within the three goals varies across the countries (OECD 2004a; Watts and Fretwell, 2004).

As in many countries, the responsibility for career services is often fragmented across different ministries and branches, there is a need for strong coordination and leadership mechanism in order to develop a strategy for lifelong access to career guidance. Coordination is needed to bring together relevant stakeholder groups and guidance providers in order to develop a sustainable infrastructure, quality guidelines and marketing strategy for the career services (Watts, 2014).

The reviews and subsequent recommendations acted as a catalyst for structured collaborative initiatives between international organisations. The OECD and the European Commission produced a handbook (OECD 2004b) for policy makers and a similar handbook (ILO 2006) [1] addressed to low and middle-income countries was published by the International Labour Organisation. The follow-up of the proposed actions have been further elaborated within International Symposia on Career Development and Public Policy (Watts, Bezanson and McCarthy 2014). By 2021, eight additional International Symposia (IS) have been carried out (in Canada, Australia, Scotland, New Zealand, Hungary, the USA, South Korea and Norway) as sustainable mechanism to carry out the dialogue between the career development practice and policy development.

Within the EU, the findings of the reviews allowed for the establishment of the European Commission Lifelong Guidance Expert Group (Watts, Sultana and McCarthy 2010) and encouraged the adoption of a European Council Resolution (2004) on lifelong guidance. In 2007-15, the European Commission supported the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) as an alliance of policy developers from the education and the employment sectors to follow-up the implementation of the Resolution priorities. The ELGPN compiled its work into *Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance: A Reference Framework for the EU and for the Commission* (ELGPN 2015b).

1.2. The context of Low and Middle Income Countries

One important lesson from the reviews was that career services were provided in a high diversity of environments and the way in which they were offered was influenced by the political and administrative structure of the country, by the level of economic development and socio-cultural factors. In conclusion, they highlighted that there is no one single model for career guidance systems and policies that fits all countries (Sultana 2018). Differences in national contexts can be particularly sharp and while career development activities hold high importance both in high income countries (HIC) and low and middle income countries (LMIC),

they need to respond to local needs and contexts. Frequent differences include (ILO 2006) social and political value structures which influence the understanding of what is the role of services, the size of the informal economy, and the availability of infrastructures, equipment, financial and human resources

Attitudes and values towards work are variable across cultures and the development of career development support should be context appropriated, avoiding direct application of imported models without any adaptation. In higher income countries values and attitudes often revolve around rooted notions of individual fulfilment, merit, success and autonomy. In LMIC, by contrast, they are frequently more attuned with the perception of work as a need, rather than a pathway to "success" and often a lesser role of individual decision in favour of contribution and respect to family and community (Arulmani 2014). Opportunity structures can be very narrow and heavily influenced by gender or age role expectations, with women frequently having reduced opportunities. Very frequently, in such cases, community, religious leaders and role models may have great importance.

Labour markets also have important specificities in LMIC, with large proportions of the population working in the informal economy, a heavy weight of rural activities, and survivalist activities. Many individuals in low-income countries undertake activities both in the formal and informal sector, and small enterprises are frequently family-owned, with children frequently participating in work. Over-population may occur in many areas, generating "mega-cities", with large weight of youth cohorts, contributing high youth unemployment and participation in the informal economy (ETF 2021). Job prospects can also shift quickly, depending on the restructuring of global supply chains which may bring employment opportunities as quickly as they snatch them. Migration and an eventual return is always prospect for many youth and a forced reality for many families.

Infrastructures and resources are a pressing challenge in many countries with reduced financial resources, few trained practitioners and lack of equipment. As the Covid-19 (Cedefop et al. 2020) crisis has demonstrated, for example, promoting the offer of digital services was frequently limited by absence of digital equipment, telecommunications infrastructure and bandwidth. The frequent weakness of national institutions and social dialogue also contributes to irregular funding, low quality standards and absence of professionalisation of practitioners.

2 The road to enhance Career Development Support Systems

▶ 2. The road to enhance Career Development Support Systems

Building on the experience of past international and European efforts to construct career development support systems and on evidence about impact and effectiveness of career development support, this section of the paper outlines

▶ an approach to the enhancement of national career development support systems in the form of a theory of change (ToC; diagram A), and

▶ a roadmap for system development (diagram B).

Both, the ToC and the roadmap constitute a framework, highlighting key elements that must be customised to country contexts and translated into country-context sensitive activities, outcomes and specific indicators. They are understood to guide national deliberation about system development but are not to be misread as blueprint.

2.1. A Theory of Change for Career Development Support Systems

This section advances a general methodology for initiating a process of system development and transformation. The methodology suggests a comprehensive process from career development support system review to the development of a national theory of change and related action plans, nevertheless non-mandatory and adaptable to existing resources and priorities. While the importance of a comprehensive review is emphasised, the review can be implemented as a staggered process, if necessary, obeying to national policy priorities.

Diagram A (below) illustrates how positive change can be achieved in national career development support systems. Impacts, described in diagram A, are closely linked to policy objectives in education, training, employment, growth and social agendas. The assumptions behind this methodology are manifold and build heavily on research evidence and prior international and European experience:

Assumptions

First, it is argued here that the process of conducting comprehensive national system reviews is important for defining evidence-based, coordinated and coherent national theories of change and action plans as basis for successful system development, because

▶ The system review provides evidence for a joint understanding of the existing system and an entry point for reflection on a joint vision for system development. Starting from country-context specific existing capacity and challenges for career development support is the best basis to start system development. Highlighting and building on existing capacity is appreciative and better connects a vision to existing systems.

▶ Stakeholder cooperation and collaboration across policy fields from system review until the development of a national ToC and action plans, including ensuring a strong involvement of practitioner and client/user voice, ensures commitment and engagement of all to a realistic reform agenda.

▶ Investing in the involvement of practitioner´s voice in system development will pay off, as they are the single most important key actors similar to teachers in education.

▶ Process outputs and outcomes like client/user feedback forms to gather their views, practitioner surveys, (informal) stakeholder cooperation and coordination etc. are early quick wins that can be leveraged and further used.

▶ Any intervention logic needs to respond to key challenges of the country context, from low financial resource availability, large informal economy, to booming young populations, high women inactivity and limited engagement of social partners etc. as well as any intervention logic needs to respond to key challenges to the uptake of innovation and reform, being: mentality and habits like lack of institutional cooperation; resistance to change due to e.g. high dependency on high level hierarchies' decisions; commitment to reforms and understanding of reforms.

Secondly, the inherent idea of the methodology "theory of change"[2] is to enable systematic, realistic, and participatory planning and to avoid jumping on defining interventions without solid reflection: all relevant stakeholders engage into a process of developing an overall vision and backwards mapping of desired outcomes for career development support in their country, and backing those outcomes with rationales and assumptions - which constitutes the theory of change, outlining how change comes into being against an overall objective. Only then stakeholders decide on concrete activities to achieve those outcomes and define indicators as basis for progress monitoring and impact evaluation. The assumptions behind this approach are that

▶ such a joint reflection process is powerful as it brings together actors in a fragmented system of service delivery and initiates collaboration and cooperation, as one of the most essential enablers and barriers for career development support systems. Bringing stakeholders together on a regular basis will create a new culture and opportunities for further collaboration and cooperation and innovation/reform, and contribute to overcome the feeling of "I cannot change the system" as in cooperation with others more is possible suddenly;

▶ the process helps overcome a core barrier for continuous system enhancement by providing a basis for monitoring and evaluation;

▶ it facilitates the definition of realistic and achievable action plans;

▶ it would facilitate the involvement of potential donors if wished and/or required.

Thirdly, research has an important role in innovating career development support systems, and also if there are no or limited capacities in a country, international research could provide impetus to system development. Therefore, the country reviews are an essential tool to involve researchers and to inform research. Research could provide evidence on effectiveness and impact of support systems in the future, therefore in the best case research institutions such as universities should be involved in the system review exercise. The assumption is that

▶ a natural collaboration and reciprocally beneficial relationship between research, policymakers and practitioners is created, informing continuous system enhancement.

Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals

The envisaged impacts, as shown in diagram A, reflect agreed global targets related to the guarantee of universal access to education and training, and decent work as reflected by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The enhancement of career development support systems is particularly relevant for:

▶ SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, due to the pivotal role career development support plays in

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2   See https://www.theoryofchange.org

Diagram A: Theory of Change – National Career Development Support Systems

Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Targeted activities towards capacity development

Capacity levels: system – provider - practitioner

Possible "coordination" outputs: Charter committing all signatories to cooperation for developing a national ToC; cross-ministerial working group on career development support; national and regional guidance fora bringing together all relevant stakeholders across sectors and policy fields

Possible "funding" outputs: national training funds and programmes aimed at financing TVET, LLL and learning in enterprises to integrate career development; career vouchers for individuals with limited cost sharing; reliable and transparent information on service expenditure; incentives to career development in enterprise and community contexts

Possible "quality" outputs: occupational standards for practitioners; ethical guidelines for practitioners; accreditation of service providers; tracer studies evaluating medium to long-term impact of education programmes; M&E strategy for career development support; Labour Market Information System

Possible "access" outputs: career education curricula in general education and IVET; lifelong entitlements to career development support; all age service strategy to guarantee full population coverage; outreach programmes for long term unemployed, early school leavers or rural populations; digital services and telephone support

Possible "technology" outputs: diversified service delivery to all citizens; improved access to information and career-related content and materials; career development support included in national digital skills strategy; use of ICT integrated in career education; practitioner training in use of ICT; collaborative processes for career development among peer groups; involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the design of digital and online services

Coordination: Improved cooperation and coordination of services and stakeholders, towards better support and integration with other relevant services

Funding: Improved funding arrangements, towards system stability and accountability in every relevant delivery context

Quality: Improved and sustained quality of provision of career development services within a culture of continuing improvement

Access: Improved access of youth, adults and vulnerable groups to career development support services and career learning, making the best of available tools

Technology: Improved use of technologies, to improve delivery, cooperation, increase access and accessibility, and support practitioners work

Envisaged Development Impact:
Improved learning, social and labour market outcomes of individuals and improved career development support for the employed through the establishment and strengthening of national, regional and local lifelong career development support systems. Specific impacts include:

▶ Lifelong career support for all
▶ Better transitions into formal economic activity
▶ Improved skills development, utilisation and career management for the employed
▶ Increased subjective career success in terms of satisfaction and sense of meaningfulness
▶ Improved adult learning, career transitions and employment stability
▶ Improved learning, social and labour market outcomes for youth
▶ Equal access of social groups and between genders in access to learning and the labour market
▶ Increased civic participation and environmentally conscious attitudes

breaking social glass ceiling, by developing all individuals' capacities and knowledge to be able to make informed learning and job choices and act upon them;

▶ SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, due to the powerful effect career development support has on workers and organisations in promoting skilling, reskilling, improving skills utilisation in enterprises and preparing individuals to pursue careers in new economic sectors.

For career development support systems to effectively contribute to the achievement of desired socioeconomic impacts, a number of key elements need to be in place – these are referred to as outcomes. The five outcomes reflect a significant body of research and analysis undertaken over the last two decades on career development support systems, particularly on career guidance (see for example Cedefop Inventory 2021; ELGPN 2015b; ILO 2006; OECD 2004a; Watts and Sultana 2004). The selected outcomes synthesise a number of key elements which act as reference points for the development of career development support systems:
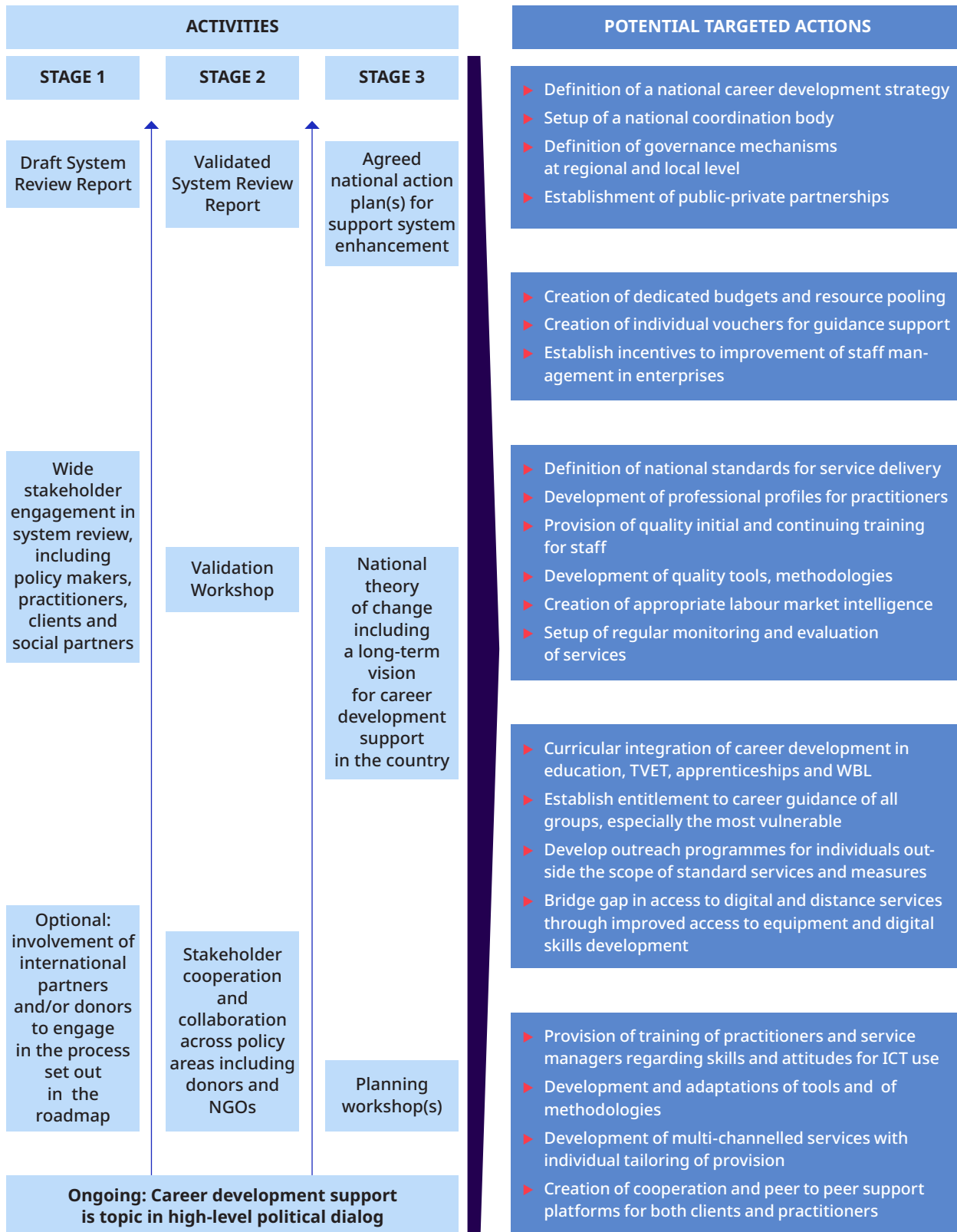
▶ Coordination: Includes all aspects related to formal coordination, strategic leadership, governance, cooperation between stakeholders and it affects all other requirements discussed under the other outcomes;

▶ Funding: Includes all aspects related to public funding, private participation (including clients), donor funding, establishment of incentives and pooling of financial resources. It also includes aspects closely related to coordination such as accountability, effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of fund management;

▶ Quality: Includes a wide range of aspects which contribute to raise and maintain the quality of provision, including the definition of standards of service and ethical treatment of personal information, professionalisation and training of practitioners and other staff, quality of tools, methodologies and information, and continuous monitoring and evaluation processes

▶ Access: Includes all aspects related to enabling access to career development support by all individuals and groups, especially the most vulnerable. It includes accessibility, cultural sensitivity and user-friendly delivery, establishment of services, service entitlements, outreach initiatives and embeddedness of career learning in other activities. It is closely related to coordination, quality and good use of technology;

▶ Technology: Includes all aspects related to the appropriate use of technology in the delivery of services, including design and implementation of digital and distance services, use of technology in learning environments and careers centres, use of communication platform, implementation of individual digital portfolios, or the use of innovative solutions such as AI.

Each outcome will require the development of a number of activities, defined by national stakeholders, which should produce the critical outputs generically described in diagram A. The theory of change emphasises a nation-wide process of increased exchange, collaboration and cooperation as central to facilitating system development. It proposes a participatory process of national system review to create an evidence base on services and the system that informs the participatory development of a national theory of change and related action plans for system development. In the present approach, the concrete establishment of detailed prioritisation and planning of outcomes and indicators in the national theory of change, as well as the exact setup of action plans should be achieved by national stakeholders, while advice and support from international organisations stands ready in case requested.

Each outcome is further characterised by three levels of capacity:

▶ System level: hard capacities such as laws, policies, strategies at national/regional/local level clarifying roles and responsibilities, coordination and collaboration (public-public,

Diagram B: Roadmap to Support System Enhancement

ACTIVITIES		
STAGE 1	**STAGE 2**	**STAGE 3**
Draft System Review Report	Validated System Review Report	Agreed national action plan(s) for support system enhancement
Wide stakeholder engagement in system review, including policy makers, practitioners, clients and social partners	Validation Workshop	National theory of change including a long-term vision for career development support in the country
Optional: involvement of international partners and/or donors to engage in the process set out in the roadmap	Stakeholder cooperation and collaboration across policy areas including donors and NGOs	Planning workshop(s)
Ongoing: Career development support is topic in high-level political dialog		

POTENTIAL TARGETED ACTIONS

- ▶ Definition of a national career development strategy
- ▶ Setup of a national coordination body
- ▶ Definition of governance mechanisms at regional and local level
- ▶ Establishment of public-private partnerships

- ▶ Creation of dedicated budgets and resource pooling
- ▶ Creation of individual vouchers for guidance support
- ▶ Establish incentives to improvement of staff management in enterprises

- ▶ Definition of national standards for service delivery
- ▶ Development of professional profiles for practitioners
- ▶ Provision of quality initial and continuing training for staff
- ▶ Development of quality tools, methodologies
- ▶ Creation of appropriate labour market intelligence
- ▶ Setup of regular monitoring and evaluation of services

- ▶ Curricular integration of career development in education, TVET, apprenticeships and WBL
- ▶ Establish entitlement to career guidance of all groups, especially the most vulnerable
- ▶ Develop outreach programmes for individuals outside the scope of standard services and measures
- ▶ Bridge gap in access to digital and distance services through improved access to equipment and digital skills development

- ▶ Provision of training of practitioners and service managers regarding skills and attitudes for ICT use
- ▶ Development and adaptations of tools and of methodologies
- ▶ Development of multi-channelled services with individual tailoring of provision
- ▶ Creation of cooperation and peer to peer support platforms for both clients and practitioners

Box 1. Need for customisation

While the generic ToC presented in diagram A above provides a reference framework to support the process of the development of the national theory of change and action plan, it is expected that each country adapts it to its own context, needs and development priorities.

Also the generic roadmap needs to be customised as some countries might for instance engage into regional meetings first and only then move to a national meeting due to existing governance structures, level of autonomy or mere size of a country which otherwise would not allow for inclusion of all relevant stakeholders.

public-private, across policy areas and sectors, central-regional-local), quality assurance frameworks, monitoring and evaluation systems or professionalisation standards for organisations and practitioners; core capacities such as a culture for public-public and public-private cooperation;

▶ Provider level: hard capacities such as clear organisational mandate, adequate human resources, financial resources, tools, methodologies, infrastructure, adequate service offer in line with existing needs, quality LMI; core capacities such as a change management culture;

▶ Practitioner level: hard capacities such as qualified and skilled practitioners, access to professional development opportunities; core capacities such as career adaptability of practitioners.

Achieving change at system level is, nevertheless, a potentially difficult process, which requires a good understanding of national needs and untapped potentials. It is also a process which requires early engagement of key stakeholders in search of an agreed vision and a set of priorities. Absence of coordinated action results in misdirected investments and the setup of services that do not address the needs of the population and enterprises.

The next diagram B illustrates a generic staged process (the "roadmap") towards system enhancement, incorporating a structured approach that includes a review of the national system and the development of a coordinated national theory of change and first action plans. The proposed process employs a country-context sensitive methodology for system development with minimum fixed process steps, characterised by country driven objective setting and planning that is informed by international good practice.

2.2. Roadmap to Career Development Support System Enhancement

The *full* process of system review until development of action plans relies on three fundamental stages:

▶ Stakeholder engagement and system review;

▶ Validation of review and policy priorities;

▶ Development of national theory of change and action plans.

Stakeholder engagement and system review

Early stakeholder engagement is fundamental for both the review process and the achievement of a shared national vision and action plans. Promoting an ongoing high-level

dialogue is essential, by raising awareness among policy makers, social partners, donors, universities and research institutes and other relevant stakeholders about the relevance of career development support and its multiple impacts. This process is fundamental to achieve political consensus and potential donor engagement and can be achieved by promoting informative meetings between national stakeholders, potential donors, international partners as well as through the dissemination of written information. The initial engagement could lead national stakeholders to enter an agreement with international partners and/or donors to engage in the process set out in the roadmap if wished and/or needed, defining the scope of the support to be provided, which can include support for a national review, organisation of relevant meetings, support to the elaboration of a national theory of change and action plans as well as policy advice and (technical) support on the implementation of relevant planned actions.

The national system review is designed as self-assessment of national stakeholders to enhance their engagement and make them part of system development. It is strongly evidence-based and ideally facilitated by an independent national expert in close cooperation with national public administration and international partners. The review process should include policy and administrative documentation, research reports and relevant data, as well as a structured consultation process (interviews) that allows to identify existing structures, services, gaps in coverage and development opportunities, taking into consideration the various views from administration, practitioners, clients/users, providers etc. All three levels of capacity (system-provider-practitioner) are to be assessed and also core capacities like culture for public-public and public-private cooperation, change management culture of providers, and career adaptability of practitioners. The consultation process needs to provide balanced perspectives across key stakeholders and the identification of shared perspectives over development priorities.

The system review process results, first, in a draft review report, ideally prepared by the independent national expert, providing an overall description of existing services, highlighting potential for development and suggesting critical areas and priorities for action, and, second, in increased (maybe still informal) cooperation and collaboration amongst key stakeholders who might usually not cooperate.

Opportunities for value gains in *comprehensive* reviews

The national reviews should ideally, and to the extent possible, be used to enhance practitioner and client/user participation in system development, for example by promoting a consultation via surveys and workshops and/or focus groups regarding practitioners' vision of the desirable changes and improvements to the system. National universities or research institutes could be involved in this with the wider view of a role of research in providing evidence for system development in the long run. Also, a set of feedback forms could be developed and used to collect client/user feedback on career development support services (for public employment services, for schools etc.) to involve clients in system development. Forms could be directly used by service providers in their daily work as "quick wins". Initiated collaboration and cooperation could be continued on informal basis as cross-ministerial working group also involving other actors such as social partners, NGOs etc.

Validation of review and policy priorities

The draft national system review report is sent to relevant stakeholders to validate information. A revised report is drafted on the basis of the received feedback. The revised report is sent to stakeholders, alongside a list of critical questions to debate. A national validation meeting is organised collaboratively between national authorities and international partners and potentially donors, engaging all relevant stakeholders. At minimum, the following groups

should be officially represented: representatives of relevant ministries, social partner representatives, professional associations of practitioners/practitioner representatives, client groups (whenever possible), international partners and potential donors.

The meeting publicly validates the results of the report. A synthesis report of the discussion is produced, ideally by an independent national expert, which constitutes the basis for the subsequent development of a national theory of change and action plans. While not mandatory, it is desirable that this meeting produces a written commitment of all involved such as a National Charter emphasizing the commitment of all to continue with the development of a national theory of change and related action plans, as well as defining questions of process leadership (shared, rotating, co-lead, one lead organisation).

Development of national theory of change and action plan(s)

The lead organisation(s) coordinates (two) workshops for the participatory development of a national theory of change. The ToC includes the definition of a common long-term outcome (vision), intermediary and short-term outcomes. A diagram visualizes the ToC. All outcomes should be given one or more indicators of success to allow the measurement of progress towards each outcome. Rationales in a theory of change explain the connections between the outcomes and why one outcome is needed to achieve another. The national theory of change is to be informed by international good practice and should depict the integration of career development support into wider policy objectives in line with the vision of national stakeholders.

The related action plans include actions to be undertaken in the short, medium and long term towards the achievement of the outcomes, as well as information on funding. The joint action plans shall be signed by all stakeholders to show their commitment. International partners stand ready to support countries in various ways in this process, for instance through arranging partnerships with various actors like international career development associations in support of the national ToC development and the following implementation phase.

The national ToC deals as compass, giving direction. It shows the various stages towards the achievement of the overall outcome, providing a systematic approach. Stakeholders would not develop one action plan to achieve the overall outcome but develop different action plans, first, for the lower level, short- to medium term outcomes. Hence, system development will take place in work packages, step by step. Over time, the higher level outcomes and even the overall outcome might and will most likely need to be adapted. Hence, with the ToC as long-term vision guiding system development, small concrete steps are taken towards the achievement of the overall outcome. It is essential in such a long-term initiative to focus on short- and mid-term outcomes and the achievement of quick-wins in each phase to uphold motivation and engagement, and to understand planning documents as living documents.

The implementation of reviews in neighbouring countries also allows to explore opportunities for regional exchange and parallel system development, by creating harmonised information that can be used to support this process. The EU experience documents significant exchange regarding policies and practices across national systems, largely encouraged by the definition of shared reference points. When integrated within a general process of regional development of skills and lifelong learning systems and promotion of regional mobility, career development reviews have particularly strong potential. It is therefore relevant to engage regional coordination bodies at an early stage whether they are formal alliances or regular cooperation forums.[3]

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3   Examples include EU, ASEAN and SAARC.

3 Achieving key outcomes

▶ 3. Achieving key outcomes

This section discusses potential strategies and actions which countries can adopt to achieve the outcomes presented in the theory of change (diagram A). This discussion is non-directive, and it avoids providing a universal prescription on how to "solve all problems" in career development support systems. Potential progress towards each outcome is discussed primarily analysing how to mobilize national and local potential in order to address specific challenges, taking into account that each country has a specific context. It is considered that there is institutional, demographic, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and that adequate solutions are variable. The current exercise aims to inform national debates around electing development priorities, and tailored actions towards the achievement of outcomes.

The discussion on each outcome follows the same structure:

1. An introduction which presents what it means to achieve that outcome;
2. Typical challenges faced by national stakeholders in meeting the requirements to achieve that outcome;
3. Potential solutions to address existing challenges, with reference to international experience.

Overlaps will occur in the discussion, since outcomes are interrelated and sometimes interdependent. For example, coordination arrangements affect all of the other outcomes, frequently determining how funding, access to services and quality assurance are setup. To the extent possible, the discussion will attempt to cross-reference the outcomes, to make these connections clear.

3.1. Achieving good coordination and governance

As career guidance is often a shared policy responsibility of several ministries, strategic leadership and well-functioning coordination and cooperation arrangements facilitate the development of the lifelong perspective of guidance policy as well as citizen access to services and products. Strategic leadership refers to how policy and systems development for lifelong guidance are managed in a country, region, and locality. It refers also to coordination and cooperation on the mechanisms that support communication, service delivery and knowledge sharing between the various stakeholders in a career development support system, at different levels of administration and across local, regional and national dimensions (Cedefop 2008; ELGPN 2015b; OECD 2004a).

Strategic leadership refers to how services are delivered by multi-disciplinary or multi-professional teams with the aim of creating seamless service delivery for citizens as a continuum from early education to retirement. It should also be noted that coordination takes place not only between sectors, but also within sectors and that levels of coordination can relate to funding and promote efficiency of investments in career guidance services and products (Barnes et al. 2020). This is crucial especially in the use of technologies in enhancing and further developing traditional approaches by innovative and more diverse service delivery. By bringing together all relevant partners in the fields of education, training, employment, youth and social inclusion it is possible to agree on national explicit cross-sectoral career development support strategies or integrate career guidance to wider education, training, employment and social policies, and in national human development strategies and programmes (ELGPN 2015b).

Typical challenges in coordination

A typical challenge in cooperation and coordination is an overall lack of shared understanding among policy makers and stakeholders of the primary purpose of career guidance services,

operation of the services and their desirable outcomes. Different career guidance services often work in structural silos and can have their own history, aims, methods and budgets. Often there are different perceptions of the concepts in defining the key features and underlying principles of career guidance (Barnes et al. 2020).

Challenges can be connected to differences in the operating cultures between different sectors responsible for career guidance (e.g. between education, employment, youth, social and health). Countries vary in their degree of centralisation and sectors can have different structures and specific mandates based on regulations defining their funding, methods and responsibilities. In agreeing on national budgets or donor resources, sectors and institutions may find themselves in competition over the same limited resources (ELGPN 2010), especially if the basis of funding is project-based. Moreover, sectoral protectionism may result in overlapping activities and lack of continuity (Barnes et al. 2020).

A major barrier to cooperation and coordination relates also to the lack of clarity and agreement regarding quality and impact of the services. Different sectors and stakeholder groups (e.g. users, policy makers, funders and researchers) are interested in different types of outcomes. If there is not available jointly agreed and standardised monitoring of inputs, processes and outcomes, it is impossible to have consistent assessment and evaluation of resource usage and results (Barnes et al. 2020). This implies it is difficult to create a national conceptual framework for career guidance services, which can be valued, implemented, and deployed by multiple stakeholders, and in different contexts in accordance with local conditions.

In meeting the individual user needs, the challenges in co-operation can be connected to fragmented or short-term funded project based service delivery. In many countries services are only established for specific age cohorts or targeted groups at specific transition points in education or in transition to labour market. This leads to inconsistent provision with some individuals receiving different services depending on their location and circumstances (Barnes et al. 2020).

Potential solutions

As an outcome of international collaboration, many countries have brought together all relevant partners in the fields of education, training, employment, youth and social inclusion, including relevant ministries, agencies and experts, and social partners to examine options for more structured cooperation (Watts et al. 2014). In several cases, public officials, stakeholders, practitioners and researchers have met in annual policy conferences and deepened their knowledge on the transversal nature of career guidance. These kinds of events have often acted as a catalyst towards a sustainable representative structure/entity with a coordination, advisory, implementation and partnership role in national career guidance systems and policy development.

In establishing a potential representative structure, it is necessary to consider, which entity has the mandate and responsibility for career guidance practice and policy development and to what level should cooperation and coordination occur. In securing maximum impact in policy development and governance, all stakeholder agencies and relevant ministries need to be linked to enable best possible cooperation, including education, employment, training, youth and welfare (Barnes et al. 2020).

Sustainable multi-level structure for governance of career guidance services consists of legislation, strategies, standards, monitoring, technical support and quality development which are provided/defined at central level with stakeholder involvement.

In the absence of a formal entity for strategic leadership, cooperation and coordination can be promoted by a cross-ministerial working group or national lifelong guidance forum. For

Box 2. Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET)

The Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET) is a national research institute affiliated with the Prime Minister's Office. The Institute has established a system for collecting information and analysing the labour market trends on regular basis. According to the Career Education Act in 2015, KRIVET was designated as the National Career Development Center. This center is expected to demonstrate leadership for ensuring collaboration in national career development system with a lifelong learning approach. In co-operation with Korean Employment Information Service (KEIS), KRIVET conduct research every year to confirm the demands and issues of career education and career development. KRIVET also disseminate study outcomes to the state and local governments, office of education and regional career development centers to inform evidence based guidance practice and policy development and implementation.

https://www.krivet.re.kr

example, most of the European Union member states have established national lifelong guidance working groups or forums as an outcome of structured mutual peer learning between 2007-15 (ELGPN 2015b). A recent example of this kind of formal entity is the Council for the National Qualifications Framework in Serbia, which was mandated to bring together representatives of education, employment, youth, economy, local self-governments, health, private sector, NES, trade unions, secondary schools, higher education institutions and civil society.

A national forum should have a clearly identified task. Merely being a platform for dialogue and exchange of information may not be enough (Cedefop 2008). A permanent national forum can act as a sounding board for government initiatives and it can proactively promote the concept and vision of career guidance through concrete policy proposals with subsequent actions for sectoral implementation. At the same time, the stakeholders can inform their own sectors of the jointly agreed initiatives.

A governmentally initiated national forum can have some legitimacy due to concrete links with relevant ministries with sufficient resources to carry out the designated tasks. However, close links with the government may limit their own independent initiatives. On the other hand, a bottom-up initiated forum can provide more independent opinions, but its impact depends on its success in attracting key actors and stakeholders to become its members. Both of these options have their advantages and disadvantages: it is important that the option selected is in harmony with the needs and aspirations of the stakeholders in the national contexts. It is also important that the representative structure has sufficient resources for the necessary technical work in the documentation of the work and communicating the outcomes of the cooperation and coordination activities. (Cedefop 2008.)

In addition to national forums, many countries have established similar coordination mechanisms at local and regional levels. If the country has national strategies, the regional forums can coordinate local implementation of the policies. If the authority in guidance-related matters has been delegated from national to regional levels, the regional forums have more autonomy to design local priorities for the service delivery (Cedefop 2008). In most countries, municipalities and local public employment offices are increasingly important in coordinating guidance stakeholders.

In meeting the individual needs, the career guidance is shifting from traditional expert services to transdisciplinary collaboration to established networks with dynamic combination of independent and communal ways of working (Kettunen and Felt 2020). This implies that co-operation needs to be expanded to division of labour among the different service providers

to eliminate overlapping duties and to reduce unnecessary competition over clients and resources. As no service provider or organisation can alone meet the needs of diverse client groups, several countries have developed one-stop centres for careers and employment advice and guidance and counselling, with services provided under one roof (OECD 2004a, 2019a). In Finland, the "Ohjaamo" centres are a good example of horizontal policy integration, in which a single point of access facilitates information and referral to the right service, showing how more effective collaboration can lead ultimately to fuller use of higher-quality resources and services. Co-locating different public services under one roof, involving users and stakeholders in designing services create new forms of 'public-private-people partnership' with a strong focus on collaboration and horizontal ties between individuals and agencies (Kettunen and Felt 2020).

Today, the hybrid nature of current working life calls career services for closer relationship with employers and for direct exposure with future skills demand. Borbély-Pecze and Hutchinson (2014) emphasise that career guidance connected with work-based learning provides young people with a knowledge and understanding of what work is, and what occupational areas they are attracted to. More structured cooperation and partnerships with employers enhance the development of guidance services, which support both the needs of the individuals, and the development of the enterprises' competence level and competitiveness (Arnkil, Spangar, and Vuorinen 2017).

3.2. Appropriate funding arrangements and incentives to career development

Achieving appropriate funding arrangements for career development activities guarantees a stable and quality offer of career development support services to all individuals, independent of their activity status, gender or culture. This implies that there is a stable dedicated public budget that is allocated for key career development activities in education, training and employment support as well as to incentives for enterprise based activities. Such a stable budget also presupposes there is a clear basis for which to define appropriate levels of expenditure, staffing needs and likely effort needed to undertake the necessary activities to address all target groups. Funding strategies also attempt to pool resources from key stakeholders in a balanced manner and manage resulting funds in a transparent and accountable way. Well-developed systems channel funding and incentives to the most effective activities to support target groups and draw information from research and well established monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Typical challenges

Career development support and particularly career guidance is increasingly recognised as having positive impacts on the learning and labour market outcomes of individuals, as well as on enterprise productivity. Despite the pivotal role these activities can play in education, support for the unemployed or the development of human resource strategies, they tend not to be consistently funded and incentives for their take up are rare. Lack of funding leads to an irregular offer, with potential lack of coverage of important and vulnerable groups, such as youth transitioning into the labour market or low skilled workers. It also leads to low quality provision, due to low professionalism and absence of basic equipment and tools.

The most common challenge related to financing is the absence of dedicated and stable public funding for career development support. Career guidance in education and training is frequently under-funded, without clear yearly allocation and not necessarily associated with any type of assessment of needs. Another related frequent issue is the lack of clarity regarding the administrative responsibility for guidance activities, which results in an even

less clear allocation of resources. Responsibility for the management and financing of career guidance in education and training frequently "floats" between different stakeholders with different priorities, such as schools, TVET institutes or municipal authorities, depending on the whims of administrative or political reforms.

Public employment services, very frequently have low differentiation of career guidance and counselling, merging these activities within general "job support" measures, which may include almost many other unrelated functions performed by a job centre. High intensity support, such as individual counselling, tends to suffer from systematic lack of funding, with dramatic effects for the most vulnerable, such as long term unemployed or inactive youth. The lack of clearly identified and accountable activities is also reflected in the weak targeting of public investment when developing measures under the heading of "youth" or "unemployment support". Often funds end up being detoured to measures with low concern those in most need of the service including informal and low skilled workers with limited long term carer prospects. Low accountability is also is not favourable to the promotion of service quality, since it does not allow for systematic monitoring of activities, their outputs and outcomes.

Low accountability reflects greatly the lack of clarity surrounding what constitute adequate levels of expenditure in guidance activity, without which earmarking of funds may become difficult. Informed and trustworthy estimates of service expenditure are still not common practice and it is not frequent that governments have objective information regarding necessary levels of staffing and effort needed to respond to existing needs. While not constituting an unsurmountable challenge generating good estimates requires an agreement regarding quantity and quality of outputs and an effective service monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

Funds allocated to career development also tend to be uncoordinated at national and local level, creating potential duplication of resources and lowering the potential scale and impact of available support. Funding allocated to education, training, employment services and the promotion of staff development in smaller enterprises rarely obeys to a strategic view of how to support individual career pathways or local development.

Another important challenge is the lack of diversity of funding sources. Public funding is a natural source for the provision of services with high positive externalities and with a high social justice orientation such as career guidance. Nevertheless, many of the benefits of career development support are reaped at private level, through cost savings and productivity impacts of good placements in vacancies and apprenticeships and effective staff planning. Career development activities increase the efficiency of skill development investment by firms as well as the one promoted by individual grants and learning entitlements. It is therefore important to encourage the participation of enterprises in the funding of career development, via contribution to employment and training funds

Potential responses

It is important to secure funding and diversify the sources for funding of career development activities. An important step to do so is to acknowledge their autonomous character so that they can be accounted and budgeted for in the context of, for example, local educational networks or employment services. In the case of enterprises, career development activities should be explicitly considered when developing HR and training budgets. Funding of career development support can combine a diversity of public sources, including transfers from central government budget, specialised agencies' funding (e.g. TVET), regional and local administration budgets, as well as local development or sector oriented funding. In low-income countries, nevertheless, donor funding tends to play a significant role, with services being often provided via NGOs. While this type of funding is frequently essential to the

establishment of career development support, care must be taken to ensure long –term, sustainable sources. In situations where resources are low, public-private partnerships may provide an appropriate solution.

Creation of reliable and transparent information regarding expenditure must exist, alongside clear allocation of responsibilities and the guarantee that funds are in fact earmarked for the activities they aim to support. It is important that as career development support starts to pool resources from diverse sources, including private contributions and market or quasi market supply grows, that effective governance and quality assurance mechanisms are put into place. Clear competence and quality standards must be in place and accreditation/certification of private providers should exist when public funds are allocated to them. Monitoring and evaluation of services need to be put into practice, towards continuous service improvement (see for example Powers, 2017).

Effective governance and accountability for the use of funds is an essential ingredient to expand and stabilize funding. Combination of public sources requires, nevertheless, good inter-ministerial and vertical coordination, good local governance and a clear framework for fund allocation at local level. In Finland, regional career guidance forums have been developed to coordinate multi-stakeholder efforts to support career development systems, operating under the authority of the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) that are responsible for regional development by managing the implementation of policies mandated and funded by the central government. Despite the need to provide earmarked funding to career development activities, they should not be separate realities. They are instrumental for effective and efficient support of TVET, lifelong learning and employment policies as well as to the success of training incentives to enterprises. National training funds and programmes aimed at financing TVET, LLL and learning in enterprises should therefore integrate career development (e.g. support to course choices, assessment of workers training needs) as a key ingredient and explicitly allocate funds to their implementation. If based on training levies, this type of funding also ensures employers' contributions to the financing of career development. Employers and trade unions can also pool their resources with local providers such as schools and employment centres to promote activities leading to work exposure of students, sourcing of labour market information, and promoting matching with job and apprenticeship positions.

Public subcontracting of career development support to private providers or civil associations with strong quality assurance mechanisms is also a potential solution. In France, individuals who want to access training using their personal training account, have the right to access a personal counsel for professional development in an accredited provider, in many cases

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Box 3. National Skills Fund – South Africa

The South African National Skills Fund (NSF) was established in 1999 to provide funds to support projects that are national priorities in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), that advance the Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) of South Africa and that support the National Skills Authority in its work. The NSF is funded by a combination of sources, that include skills development levies over enterprises, interest earned on investments held at the Public Investment Corporation, uncommitted surpluses of sector education and skills authorities, funds appropriated by Parliament for the Fund and donations, In recent years the NSF has allocated significant amounts to develop the capacity of career development services (DHET & NSF, 2019).

Department of Higher Education and Training - NSF (dhet.gov.za)

subcontracted by the State. Direct provision of grants to individuals is also a possibility. In Belgium (Flanders), the public employment service, VDAB, provides individuals career vouchers up to 550 euros, which can be utilised to access services in certified providers. This system also considers a small contribution on behalf of beneficiaries (40 euros) which arguably operates as an incentive for individuals to commit with the process. The French and the Belgium cases provide two distinct examples of individual entitlement to career development, through quasi market mechanisms. They also exemplify how career development is an integrating part of the LLL agenda and why resources allocated to fund training and skills acquisition should finance career development.

3.3. Improved and sustained quality of provision of career development services within a culture of continuous improvement

Quality in guidance is influenced by system (e.g. legislation, collaboration and coordination mechanisms), provider (e.g. standards for providers) and practitioner capacity (e.g. practitioner qualification requirements, code of ethics), hence goes beyond the relation between practitioner and the client. Disposing of a solid quality assurance policy system ensures common quality standards of service delivery and allows for continuous, evidence-based improvement of career guidance practices and policies, increased financial accountability and transparency. Quality assurance measures include (a) national standards, (b) labour market intelligence and careers information, (c) monitoring and evaluation of services and d) continuous improvement of the system.

Typical challenges – labour market intelligence (LMI)

Individuals and their families are challenged when lacking reliable, quality career information to take informed decisions about participation in learning and the labour market. Labour market information including on employment trends per sector has particular importance for quality career development support services. Coordination between the stakeholders from Ministries, statistical offices, sector and professional organisations, education and training institutions, to social partners and civil society involved in collecting information can be a severe challenge though. For some countries data collection itself might already be hard due to limited capacity and instrument availability to effectively and regularly collect and process relevant and reliable labour market information, while for others the challenge lies in connecting different sources, analysing and putting information at the disposal in a structured and useful manner, and yet others struggle with translating information into useful intelligence for several user groups. Also, continuous monitoring inter alia through the use of novel methods like big data applications to map new trends might be difficult. Severe challenges arise with poor statistical infrastructure like inadequate resources for statistical programmes; different methodologies in use; insufficient sample sizes and frequency of data collection; lack of human resources and sufficient analytical capacity to interpret data; fragmented processes; lack of policies including to facilitate the sharing of information; and dependency on donor funding.

In addition to issues linked to the gathering, production and dissemination of data and intelligence, a common problem is that LMI tends to be weakly integrated in career guidance processes. This leads to the provision of weakly contextualised labour market data to individuals without any support, rendering it useless, especially for the less literate. In such a context, individuals find it difficult to understand data on occupations and labour market trends, especially if they lack adequate territorial and sectoral scope. Useful qualitative data such as information on existing local vacancies and workplaces can also be absent, partly due

to low employer engagement in career guidance and production of LMI. Finally, practitioners need to be appropriately trained in the use of LMI, a very common weakness both in their continuing and initial training (Schiersmann 2012).

Potential responses

Setting up a Labour Market Information System (LMIS), i.e. institutional arrangements, technology platforms, datasets, information flows and procedures to coordinate collection and compilation, storage, analysis, retrieval, and dissemination of data and information is a common solution if resources allow, e.g. through labour market and training observatories that can be integrated e.g. in ministries to ensure funding (ETF 2016). Setting up LMIS is a meaningful long-term objective, but it might be best to establish simple functions first and incrementally develop a comprehensive LMIS. A good starting point is cooperating in national and sectoral skills councils like in Azerbaijan (ETF 2014), which mobilize social partners and other relevant stakeholders in, amongst other activities, identifying skills needs and promoting learning and work opportunities. Another possibility is to cooperate in national and regional guidance fora, like in Finland, bringing together all relevant stakeholders across sectors, from education, employment and social fields to coordinate, including the collection, analysis and dissemination of labour market intelligence and careers information.

In particular, providing information with local relevance is key for which tracer studies can be used. Those are regularly repeated and content wise consistent surveys of graduate cohorts after three months to three years (ETF 2017a, b). They inform LMI, help evaluate medium to long-term impact of education programmes, improve the education and training content and study conditions, improve the transition of graduates from education to the labour market, and can help improve education and training and employment policies. Next to training practitioners in using LMI, it is required to develop client/user's competence to use career information for decision making on learning and labour market participation from early schooling onwards through involvement in career education covering „decision

Box 4. Skills Development Scotland – United Kingdom

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland's national skills body and an example of a formal entity in charge of strategic leadership, quality and systems development of career services on national level. It has the overall mandate to provide career services for all age groups. As part of the Scottish Government Equality Impact Assessment in all national policymaking, the SDS undertakes individual customer surveys, focus groups and consultations to feed continuous improvement or revisions of national policies in career development. SDS maintains key resources for service delivery including the Career Education Standards, Labour Market Information, Career Management Skills, MyWoW web service and materials for Work Based Learning.

SDS pays attention to the development of skills intelligence to understand the current and future demand of skills across the country and provides this data for employers, career service providers and individuals. They maintain up-to-date information on the full range of routes and pathways that can be taken into careers, including options for work-based learning. This information informs the development of their resources, such as workshop materials and online digital content. SDS follows up systematically the implementation of their services and commission research relating to skills and employability. The data is generally shared between key partners

https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/

learning, opportunity awareness, transition learning and self-awareness" (Sultana 2012, 230). Competence development should continue seamlessly over a lifespan and be adjusted to clients' needs, e.g. when presenting LMI online, provision of support via a chat function should be offered. At policy level, a regulation on LMIS is needed, also looking at the role of technology in the collection, analysis and delivery of data. In particular, the use of big data is promising.

Typical challenges – national standards

National standards include competence frameworks for practitioners, legally defined qualifications or licences, national register of professionals, accreditation of service providers, programme recognition frameworks, quality standards for services, ethical guidelines, guidelines for use e.g. of the internet in career development support as well as quality tools and methodologies which set the frame for common quality standards of service delivery. Absence of quality standards for career development support services lead to general low quality of provision, low labour market and learning relevance as well as unethical treatment and/or discrimination. Non-existence of standards for career development support services is generally reflected in non-professionalised services, where the rule is the lack of clarity regarding roles, responsibilities and expected outcomes, resulting in a poor public image. Fragmented standards for sectors or particular stakeholders is another challenge. Learning on the job is a widespread practice instead of well-defined competences of practitioners. Developing common standards for a diversity of providers and target groups is however challenging for many countries. Ethical and practice guidelines are a common means to ensure quality of service delivery, some include strong social agenda mandates in such guidelines, like Sweden. In most cases they are voluntary though and not linked to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Upskilling and continuous professional development often also fail due to practitioner resistance, possible due to a lack of legal provisions.

Potential responses

The definition of occupational standards for practitioners is a key mechanism to assure the quality of services across providers, sectors and policy fields. All relevant actors including practitioners should be involved in their development. Also, national and international professional associations of practitioners play an important role in developing standards[4], in providing continuous professional development to practitioners and in supporting national practice and policy development, inter alia, through sharing good practice. A mostly underused instrument is peer learning although it is an essential driver for continuous professional development, e.g. through practitioner networks like in Kazakhstan or work-based learning pathways in Scotland. External quality reviews followed by accreditation of providers is common practice e.g. in Ireland. To enable the development of common standards, Ireland for instance developed first shared principles of guidance like accessibility and impartiality to reach common ground amongst actors and only then to derive standards and a quality assurance framework.

Typical challenges – monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Due to limited financial resources and competing demands many countries collect evidence in all policy areas to justify expenditures and improve cost-benefit ratios, but most countries face challenges in systematic data collection on career guidance across education, employment, and social fields. Countries lack basic data from services delivered, to number of practitioners,

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4   http://guidancequality.eu

as well as data for impact evaluation and for creating linkages between career development support interventions and educational, economic and employment, and social outcomes of clients/ users. Typical short fallings include irregular or non-existing monitoring, focus on quantitative data with limited information about why interventions proved successful, limited integration of career guidance into existing M&E exercises, a misinterpretation of the concepts of monitoring as reporting exercise and evaluation as collection of client/user satisfaction data directly after interventions, as well as limited use of evidence from M&E in the further development of practices and policies. Certain activities are simply not monitored at all, because they are not differentiated and bundled with other activities such as placement services - sometimes based on disagreement on what constitutes an intervention to be monitored or a relevant outcome.

Potential responses

It is pivotal that a country has at its disposal a legally binding framework for M&E that applies to all career development support services independent of sectors or stakeholders. This builds the fundament of evidence-based policy making and ensures continuous and incremental development of the evidence base on lifelong support provision across policy areas and sectors. Evidence can support policy development in line with related wider policy targets on education, lifelong learning, employment, poverty reduction till social inclusion; can support the setting of strategic goals; planning of services; training of practitioners; and the optimal use of resources. Public, private and civil society stakeholders, especially practitioners, engaged in support services at national, regional and local level from across education and training, employment, youth, social and health policy areas should contribute to develop and update the legal framework on M&E, being e.g. an M&E strategy. Using evidence from M&E in the further development of practices and policies is essential and there is a role for a consultative body which could feed guidance system evaluations into policy decisions in employment, education and training.

Important starting point for developing a legal framework on M&E is to define M&E key features, including in particular how M&E of career development support fits with existing approaches e.g. in education; defining the roles of public, private and civil society stakeholders, in particular practitioners and clients/users in M&E; naming appropriate M&E methodologies and tools as well as processes to ensure systematic data collection, analysis, reporting and use of data; most importantly defining what data to collect, and how data are used for service and system development needs, and describing funding sources. Focusing on outcomes and long-term impacts for individuals, such as effects over income and status, and the economy (unemployment, inactivity levels, productivity) is important to inform policy and practice Monitoring of inputs including financial resources, time, human capital and

▶ **Table 1 – Examples of measurable outcomes**

Socioeconomic	TVET/employment Organisations	Individual
Transition rates (employment, education)	Successful alignment of individuals' skills and interests with labour market demand	Meeting personal interests, perceived success (e.g. status, livelihood, community)
Duration of transitions	Variations in retention/dropout rates	Perceived variations in self-knowledge and efficacy
Rates of placement	Variations in beneficiaries employability skill levels	Perceived variations in employability skills and LO's
Transitions from/to unemployment	Higher progression rates	Transitions to further education and training

service use and satisfaction is usually easier and therefore a good starting point while it already builds a basis for evaluation.

Many countries involve research in developing M&E instruments and in building evidence on guidance provision and policy, looking inter alia at cost-benefits to governments, communities, and individuals. To channel evidence back to practitioners, countries include learning about the evidence base and how to monitor in initial and continuous professional development of practitioners. Ireland e.g. developed an online school guidance handbook to inform practitioners about "what works". To ensure systematic data collection, Hungary's national guidance forum developed performance indicators for all lifelong guidance, Serbia developed standards for providers in all sectors (ETF 2021a), Ireland established a quality assurance framework for external reviews, and Germany developed a national quality assurance system with indicators and a quality development framework for providers (German National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment 2016).

3.4. Access to career guidance and development services for all

Widespread access to career development support implies that individuals of all ages, independently of gender, culture, socioeconomic status or geographic location have access to relevant services and measures. This means that career guidance services are non-discriminatory and that individuals can find support within the scope of one or more available services. Accessible services are responsive to individual needs/preferences and context and provide a service which can be tailored to individuals and employs adequate methodologies, tools and language to respond to those needs and preferences. Good access also implies that services and activities are offered in the most relevant context for its provision and provide access to complementary support, when needed. Access can be increased by widening entitlements of individuals, creating user-friendly digital and distance services, undertaking outreach initiatives to the most vulnerable and embedding careers support in other activities and services.

Typical challenges

Simple non-existence of services providing career guidance, career education or career development support to workers both in the formal and informal economy is the most common challenge to access. Many countries have no or very rudimentary coverage of these target groups as well as weak geographical coverage, not offering consistent support in education, TVET, work based learning, employment services, enterprises, nor communities in rural areas. When available, services frequently tend to have a narrow scope and offer services to limited groups, such as enrolled students or registered unemployed receiving benefits. Often this creates patchy and fragmented provision and lack of offer for the vast majority of the population, including employed people, inactive youth or women in domestic employment.

Services may also offer activities which are not adjusted to the target groups, employing obscure or difficult language, or culturally inadequate contents. They may also not be adjusted for individuals with special needs and offer poor support to people undergoing situations of financial duress, or suffering from physical and psychological health. When digital solutions are found, they are often developed with disregard for the fact that people may not have the necessary digital and literacy skills to autonomously use them, nor the equipment or internet connection to access them. In many cases digital services do not offer the possibility of professional support, nor do they offer any type of complementary delivery channel.

Both in face-to-face and distance services, beneficiaries are frequently offered an undifferentiated service that employs the same methods and offers exactly the same activities and contents to all individuals (e.g. typical case of group-based "job search support" in many employment services). When put into place, screening processes often serve the instrumental purpose of limiting entitlements, rather than tailoring the service to individual needs, creating further exclusion from support.

Lack of awareness about existing services is also a critical challenge. Very frequently posting the existence of a service on an internet page is branded as an "outreach" initiative, independently of its weak capacity to reach its target. Low skilled workers in firms, people undertaking rural jobs, working in households and inactive individuals are unlikely to have many opportunities to obtain information about career development support, or unaware of its value. They are generally not targeted by standard education, training and employment policies and tend to move within networks with limited access to that type of information. In many cases, career guidance services may also not benefit from a good image, discouraging voluntary access by many.

Potential responses

All sectors of the population should have an offer that addresses their needs and the setup of professionalised services in essential policies and sectors such as education, training and employment is a priority. Good coordination (and potential integration of services) is an important step towards universal access. Scotland has a well-coordinated all age service strategy, which combines the provisions of public, private and civil society organisations to guarantee full population coverage. The strategy relies on the engagement of a wide range of partners, which include not only services providers, but also sector skills councils, NGOs, professional associations, urban authorities, WBL providers among others.

Establishing lifelong entitlements to career development support is a solution that is progressively being adopted to raise universal coverage. Early access can be guaranteed by including careers education in basic education and IVET, as a stand-alone and timetabled subject, as a series of themes taught across different subjects in the curriculum, or through

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Box 5. Support to National Action Plan to Support Elimination of Child Labour – Malawi

The ILO-IPEC project SNAP (Support to National Action Plan to Support Elimination of Child Labour) in Malawi promoted capacitation of outreach services as a means to combat child labour, (re) engaging children in learning and successfully creating pathways to a dignified and secure life. SNAP had as a key goal to consaolidate and promote peer learning regarding good practices. Project mainstreamed younger children back into the formal school system at the first available calendar opportunity. Children who had disengaged from education were provided with Complimentary Basic Education (CBE) from 3-6 months and children aged 14 and above were offered vocational training options including tin-smithing, bricklaying, carpentry in addition to functional literacy training and, notably career guidance and counselling. One of its key achievements was the development of educational counselling manuals targeting working children, Community Child Labour Committees (CCLCs), parents, traditional leaders, employers of children and adult workers. These manuals have a holistic outlook and address issues such as preventive health, responsive parenting, career guidance and counselling, child abuse, working with young people.

https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_22315/lang--en/index.htm

Box 6. Outreach in the Public Employment Service – Latvia

The Latvian public employment service (SEA) uses, with significant results, outreach strategies to reengage long term unemployed and adult inactive people in learning and employment. SEA cooperates with social security and local NGO's to track and contact individuals who may benefit from the service. As part of its outreach strategy it also organizes job fairs and regional workshops for social services and NGO workers and employers in order to raise public awareness about the project and long-term unemployment issues, informing potential beneficiaries on how they can participate in activation measures and benefit from tailored support. The programme provides careful individual screening, employing an holistic approach that includes health and psychological support. Group activities and individual career counselling are provided. Participants are regularly assessed to evaluate their readiness to learn or work and be directed to skills development activities, RPL or job search.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/guidance-and-outreach-inactive-and-unemployed-latvia

extra-curricular activities. Access by working adults can be achieved, independently of their engagement in formal work or coverage by unemployment and social protection. For example, inactive adults not covered by unemployment benefits or working in informal sectors can benefit from career guidance through vouchers (e.g. Belgium) or when it is a required provision under adult learning entitlements or incentives. In the same way, youth support can be expanded to accommodate young inactive adults through community based one-stop-shops (OSS), such as the ones existent in Finland or the Netherlands. OSS provide holistic services, combining under a same roof guidance, social security, health, psychological support services, among others. Generally they rely on careful individual screening to tailor individual support, provided in a coordinated way by the network of services gathered under the OSS.

Outreach programmes are an important and often neglected component of career development offer, which is particularly effective to reach a number of individuals in need of support, such as long term unemployed, early school leavers or rural populations.

As a rule of thumb, services and activities must adapt to individuals and contexts, rather than demanding that individuals adjust to a rigid provision. Independently of the mode of delivery of the service, it is important that individuals are screened to understand their specific needs and requirements, ahead of providing a response. Well set services have professional support and offer activities adjusted to individual's level of literacy (also digital), career decision readiness and do it in a safe and respectful environment. They also offer a dynamic service that adjusts to individuals' progress, implying that there is case management and structured recording of relevant information with the consent of the client. It is important that screening is not used to curtail individual entitlements, rather being used to adjust provisions, otherwise services will engender mistrust among many groups.

Widespread usage of digital services implies that potential beneficiaries have access to digital equipment and know how to use it. It is also important that distance services provide access to channels other than the internet, allowing for less literate individuals to use the telephone. In enterprise contexts, blended support can be an important solution, through training modules for workers in training and mentors, as well as distance access to guidance providers. Staff planning and training can be much improved with access to external support, even in low resource environments, such as small enterprises.

3.5. Appropriate use of technology

The use of technologies make access to career services more feasible through more diverse service delivery to all (connected) citizens. Technology provides opportunities to extend services, especially those services that aim to reach individuals in remote locations or who are homebound due to disabilities or care responsibilities. To illustrate, technological innovations such as the expansion of the Internet, and mobile phone and social media use, present new opportunities for people to give and receive career support. There is also an ongoing need to exploit the potential for technological developments and integrate their use into all aspects of service delivery. Examples include increasing personalised information, making delivery methods more flexible or of developing AI and machine-learning in the career development. In order to maximise these opportunities, it is important to ensure that career practitioners are equipped with the competencies they need. Technology also enables automated data collection for evidence-based policy development, accountability, systems coordination and coherence within and across sectors. Further enhancement of synergies among actors and stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels is needed to ensure a common vision, leadership support and a strategic path for the implementation of new technologies at the national level.

Typical challenges

The most serious challenges to the broad implementation of technology in career development services include the lack of a robust and up-to-date technical infrastructure and limited access to equipment and internet connections for citizens and organisations at both the national and local levels. Without adequate infrastructure, it is impossible to fully capitalise on the rapidly expanding opportunities that existing and emerging technologies provide. There is an acknowledged need for national guidelines and strategies from which to operate in order to secure funding that enables citizens to access career services, including those found online.

Limited access to information and career-related content and materials remains a significant challenge in some countries. Emphasis has also been placed on lack of consistent career information and support for traditional career development services through institutional websites and additional services from national, provincial, local and institutional providers. Limitations that can make information difficult to use include those related to data validity and data presentation. There is an acknowledged need to improve availability and access to relevant, updated national, local or cultural information and content that has been modified to fit the latest technology. Even when the requisite infrastructure is available and individuals are able to access technology, the cost of adequate bandwidth and relevant content, systems or services remains a pressing concern for some countries. While the digital divide has diminished, it has not disappeared and remains an issue especially in LMIC. This digital divide related to ICT skills and usage continues to limit the ability especially among vulnerable groups to benefit fully from technological developments. One related factor that reduces access includes an absence of knowledge about how to access and use information resources. Therefore, a gap in participation may be present since even regular users of the Internet may lack the skills to fully participate in the labour market, education system, or eGovernance.

Career practitioners´ capacity building is critical to the successful integration of technology into career development practices. The skills and competencies required for the use of existing and emergent technologies in career development have often been considered secondary and have been poorly developed in initial and continuing training. A closer look at this issue has revealed that most programmes do not teach the use of ICT in a professional context. The successful integration of technology in career services is not only dependent on the skills or technical facilities available but also on practitioners' willingness to accept the changes that

new technologies may bring. Along with practitioners, managers and decision makers need to deepen their understanding of factors that may play vital roles in the continued development and successful establishment of tailored, multichannel services in which face-to-face, online, and telephone services are linked (Kettunen, 2017).

Implementing ICT in career services settings has become increasingly important and challenging due to the fragmentation of career development services, the use of diverse technologies and consistent technological developments. Problems that commonly undermine effective implementation include poor planning, a lack of practitioner participation in decision making; poor integration of new technologies within service delivery organisations; inadequate staff training; poor evaluation; and staff anxiety and resistance. While the career services sector has access to an ever-increasing number of technological products, the systems cannot always speak to each other, which prevents the exchange of information and data.

Potential responses

To improve access to technologies and networks funding must be appropriately allocated to balance the costs of hardware and software infrastructure with the costs of implementation. Given the existing high levels of competition for funding, only projects with a demonstrated need and credible plans to meet those needs are likely to receive funding. A systematic implementation process for technology is more likely to result in a credible plan, which in turn is more likely to succeed and secure funding. Any such plan should involve a program evaluation, connect technology use with an evaluation of client needs, and integrate new and existing resources, services, staff training, pilot testing and ongoing evaluation and

Box 7. Electronic Labour Exchange (E-Exchange), Kazakhstan

The digital information system E-Exchange was launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP)'s Workforce Development Centre joint steering committee (JSC). The JSC is responsible for providing methodological support to Employment Centres (ECs), and labour-market analysis and forecasts. The E-Exchange is the only centralised information resource for job-related information in Kazakhstan. Its key function is providing the public with available information on employment, job vacancies, a CV database, diagnostic tests and analytical data on the labour market, e.g. forecasts of staffing requirements and demanded specialities, analytics on salaries and vacancies by regions, on a self-service principle. Information about vacancies is collected from employers, private employment services, online job sites and ECs. Information about jobseekers is also collected from the ECs and from individual applicants. Thus, the resource accumulates a large array of data on vacancies and jobseekers. The MLSP recognised that information on employment and careers is increasing in volume and is decentralised. It used modern ICT to improve access to information. The information system accumulates big data on the labour market, thus enabling ECs and their clients to do their own research on employment opportunities. This information may be used to inform career choices and, thus, is in itself a career-guidance instrument. The E-Exchange is available to jobseekers, students, employers and private recruitment agencies. It is also a working tool of the public ECs, providing a snapshot of short and medium-term workforce requirements, employment trends and prospects, salary range and workforce supply for each region in Kazakhstan. In 2019, 312 056 citizens found employment via the website, made up of 195 938 permanent jobs and 116 118 temporary jobs.

https://rb.gy/00psup

accountability data. Including processes for ongoing evaluation in an implementation plan can provide evidence of the efficiency and effectiveness required to maintain funding.

To improve access to information and career-related content and materials, emphasis should be given to the creation and dissemination of information among collaborative partners in career service delivery, exploiting synergies and the ongoing refinement of information content and information delivery based on program evaluation data. When developing career information and resources at national level, policymakers must identify gaps in their current knowledge to achieve a more advanced understanding of how ICT can enhance career services. This understanding is fundamental to the development and successful implementation of existing and emerging technologies into systems that provide blended service delivery. If ICT is viewed solely as an information delivery channel, or if the development of tools for different user groups remains fragmented, the full potential of technology cannot be exploited in the formation of lifelong guidance policies or the pursuit of integrated service delivery. As part of a national digital skills strategy, the long-term goal must be to bridge the technological gap between organisations that are well equipped and those that are not. In meeting the needs of those who are less familiar with this technology, the policies must recognize differences in digital literacy and integrate the use of ICT in ongoing career education, wherein individuals can develop skills on how to use online services and how to be present in social media. Digital inclusion can also be promoted by allocating resources for public access with accompanying support for those who need it. Furthermore, the needs of groups with disabilities ought to be taken into account when designing services.

New methods to enable access to career development services provide opportunities to address people's needs and expectations. Adequate training helps practitioners to feel confident and competent in their work, which facilitates successful technology use in practice and the establishment of tailored, multichannel services. Effective staff training includes program evaluations to assess client needs and the staff competencies required to meet those needs. It also involves designing and pilot testing staff training resources, refining them in response to ongoing evaluations of service delivery, the evolution of ICT and changes to client needs. Specific practitioner training competencies include (Kettunen, 2017) proficiency in locating, evaluating and using online content; being a versatile and thoughtful writer; being able to generate and sustain engaging and constructive online discussion; and creating a visible and trusted online presence. Emphasis should also be given to online interventions that foster collaborative processes in career learning among peer groups. To exploit the full

Box 8. Enhancing practitioners´ understanding and use of technology – Nordic and Baltic countries

The Nordic network of higher education institutions that train career professional in the Nordic and Baltic countries (VALA), has developed an international ICT training programme for guidance and counseling practitioners using a research-based framework. The course is open to degree-seeking students and experienced practitioners from various settings, as it exposes them to situations that challenge them to see and reflect on the variation in the potential uses of technology in career guidance and counseling. Foundation considers the fact that ICT is used both on a self-help basis (e.g., self-directed use of career resources and service) and as part of face-to-face service in physical settings and distance service delivery via ICT. Specific practitioner competencies addressed during the course include proficiency in locating, evaluating and using online content; being a versatile and thoughtful writer; being able to generate and sustain engaging and constructive online discussion; and creating a visible and trusted online presence.

https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004428096_011

potential of existing and emerging technologies, career professionals must fully understand the wider goals of career services and the targets of career guidance and counselling. This also means understanding how theoretical frameworks inform existing ICT-based career services and how these frameworks can be embedded in the design of such services.

Challenges related to inadequate integration can be addressed by increasing coordination among collaborative career service partners in the design and delivery of services and through ongoing programme evaluations to monitor the effectiveness of integration. This multi-actor collaboration is thought to take place inside public administrations, between members of different public bodies, and amongst private partners. In this regard, early involvement from collaborative partners in the design of services and referral networks that prevent fragmentation and the duplication of expensive resources and services, shared staff training to improve referrals and ongoing program evaluations to monitor the effectiveness of implementation are recommended.

▶ Conclusions

▶ Conclusions

On a global scale, education, training and labour market systems are challenged by developments such as digitalisation, globalisation, demographic change, climate change and global disruptions like financial and economic crises and health pandemics like COVID-19. In this context, individuals need to deal with more frequent and complex transitions within and between education and work. Readiness and ability to lifelong learning are required as much as individuals need to develop career management skills enabling them "[…] to manage their individual life paths in education, training and work across the lifespan."[1]. (ELGPN, 2015a)

Ensuring well-functioning national career development support systems is therefore essential for individuals, but also companies, communities, and countries, in particular for LMICs, that already face challenges that are amplified through the above-mentioned global developments. Lifelong career guidance and counselling, career education, and career development support for workers are catalysts for policies aiming at economic growth, social equity, and innovation closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ILO-ETF paper therefore proposes a comprehensive methodology to perform national reviews of career development support and to initiate a process of policy enhancement which can be adapted to any context, including low income countries, and which acknowledges that there is not one single model for career development support systems and policies that fit all countries. It emphasises a nation-wide process of increased exchange, collaboration and cooperation as central to facilitating system development and proposes a participative process of national system review to create an evidence base on services and the system that informs the participatory development of a national theory of change and the definition of related action plans for system development.

National reviews are instrumental to achieve full awareness of needs for further enhancement of career development support and of potential policy and practice solutions. A national review is also key to develop a solid case with donors. The strong interlinkages between career development support, lifelong learning and the requirement of all countries to ensure quality education outcomes, economic outcomes, and social outcomes highlights the relevance of career development support and makes the case for its prioritisation. International organisations can provide policy advice for instance regarding cooperation and collaboration on lifelong career development support in the fields of education and training, employment and social policy, can provide technical assistance, promote national dialogue and mediate relationships with donors.

A key lesson learned from experiences in international cooperation on career development support is that national reviews build an essential ground for dialogue between career guidance practice and policy stakeholders leading to sustainable mechanisms of exchange on system enhancement. Full stakeholder engagement is fundamental to achieve consistent political support and wide participation, especially of social partners, as social partner engagement ensures connection to labour market realities (needs of employers and workers).

To inform national debates around potential development priorities and actions towards the achievement of outcomes, the current paper discusses potential strategies and actions. This discussion is non-directive, and it avoids providing a universal prescription on how to "solve all problems" in career development support systems. Potential progress towards each outcome is discussed primarily analysing how to mobilize national and local potential in order to address specific challenges, taking into account that each country has a specific context. It is considered that there is institutional, demographic, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and that adequate solutions are variable.

Cooperation and collaboration outcomes

Given the diversity of career services in different settings, cooperation between government sectors with stakeholder involvement is crucial to overcome practice and policy fragmentation. Among international organisations, there is an agreement that connecting career guidance to lifelong learning or skill strategies provides a basis for consistent strategic leadership for cross-sectoral policy development and enhances continuity of services between different sectors in the service delivery. Consistent co-operation and co-ordination of practice and policy development can be promoted by a cross-ministerial representative structure, working group or a national career guidance forum, which brings together representatives from education, employment, youth, health, economy and stakeholders from wider civil society.

Funding outcomes

Achieving stable funding for career guidance activities in schools and employment services is fundamental to promote employability of youth and adults. Stable public budget should be allocated to these activities, on the basis of transparent and reliable estimates, with appropriate accountability, monitoring and evaluation of its application. National training funds should also be earmarked to promote career development, especially in enterprise environments, improving staff management practices. Quasi-market solutions, such as individual vouchers can be implemented to promote access by vulnerable individuals, as long as the quality of the services is well assured.

Quality outcomes

Sustaining quality of provision of career development services within a culture of continuing improvement increases service and system effectiveness, financial accountability, and transparency. Quality assurance measures include (a) national standards such as competence frameworks for practitioners, (b) labour market intelligence and careers information, (c) monitoring and evaluation of services and d) continuous improvement of the system. Quality goes beyond the relation between practitioner and the client and is influenced by institutional (e.g. legislation, collaboration and coordination mechanisms), organisational (e.g. standards for providers) and individual capacity (e.g. practitioner qualification requirements, code of ethics). The absence of standardised monitoring of inputs, processes and outcomes, which would allow consistent assessment and evaluation of resource usage and results, is an obstacle to policy enhancement.

Access outcomes

Increasing access to career development services has a direct effect over engagement in education and training, employment levels and productivity, significantly reducing inequalities in access to learning and jobs. Early career management skills development should be promoted from basic education. All-age services can be promoted to grant universal access, by creating strong coordination between providers or setting up one-stop-shops. Outreach initiatives can be established to reach rural populations and vulnerable groups outside education, training and active labour market measures. When distance solutions are used, they should use a diversity of channels to address different levels of literacy and access to digital equipment. The success of digital solutions in increasing access is strictly dependent on widespread access to equipment, internet and on digital literacy levels of clients and practitioners.

Use of technology outcomes

The use of technologies enables more diverse service delivery to all citizens, especially those in remote locations or homebound, if ICT is not viewed solely as an information delivery channel, but as viable space for career development. To leverage the potential of ICT, it is essential that career practitioners are equipped with the competencies they need and to integrate the use of ICT in ongoing career education, wherein individuals can develop skills on how to use online services and how to be present in social media. There is also a need to ensure a common vision amongst stakeholders, leadership support and a strategic path for the implementation of new technologies at the national level. Challenges related to inadequate integration can be addressed by increasing coordination as well as formal commitment to the sustainable development among collaborative career service partners in the design and delivery of services.[5]

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5   See http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN_CMS_tool_no_4_web.pdf

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