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FOREWORD

Helmut Zelloth, ETF Thematic Review Coordinator

Stimulated by the discussions on the emerging knowledge economy as well as the Lifelong Learning perspective and a number of related initiatives at European level (European-wide consultation process on the LLL Memorandum, the Communication on LLL of the European Commission, the process of Enhanced European co-operation in VET and the process on the Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems) – career information, guidance and counselling is getting increasingly on the policy agenda at national and international level.

In this context, the European Commission recently has set up an Expert Group on "Lifelong Guidance" which has the mandate to develop a common understanding of basic concepts and underlying principles for guidance and to reflect on the European dimension of guidance for education, training and employment systems. This Group will be composed of officials from education and labour ministries, experts, social partners, NGOs representing consumers, youth and parents from both Member States and Candidate Countries as well as international bodies.

The work of this Expert Group is supported by an important body of information coming from reviews on career guidance policies which are currently being implemented by several international organisations, such as the OECD, European Commission, the World Bank, CEDEFOP and the ETF. All activities are closely linked, and experts from each organisation are participating in reviews, site visits, analytical meetings or steering committees.

On the request of the European Commission the ETF has carried out in 2002 an information collection on guidance and counselling policies in 11 Candidate Countries, based on the OECD questionnaire and focusing on the following key issues: key goals and policy instruments, roles of stakeholders, targeting and access, staffing and financing, assuring quality, delivery settings and methods, evidence base. Country reports had been prepared by 11 independent national experts with the support of the National Observatories, and the present draft synthesis report has been drawn up by an international expert, reflecting the key findings of the review.

Before publication both the country reports and the synthesis report will be subject of an official consultation process with the Ministries involved in the Candidate Countries and followed by specific dissemination activities and events.

All these developments as well as their outputs are expected to give an additional drive to the strengthening of career guidance policies in different geographical regions, including Candidate Countries (Future Member States).

Future Member States of the European Union have demonstrated high commitment to catch up with EU policies and standards in the educational field and the exchange of good practices and international co-operation is getting even more important.

We believe that this information will allow both policy makers and practicioners to better relate and benchmark their activities within the international context, as well as stimulate initiatives to further development of national systems and structures in a common Lifelong Learning perspective.

THE SITUATION OF CAREER GUIDANCE IN 11 CANDIDATE COUNTRIES
AN ETF SYNTHESIS REPORT

Executive Summary

The provision of career information and guidance throughout a citizen's life has become an issue of great importance worldwide, as societies prepare themselves to meet the challenges that the transition to knowledge-based economies represent. An unprecedented research effort has in fact been initiated by the OECD, which distributed a dedicated questionnaire to fourteen countries internationally in order to create a baseline of information on the current state of policy development in career guidance. That same survey instrument has been used by CEDEFOP to gather data on the remaining EU countries, and by the ETF in relation to 11 future member states of the EU. The World Bank will soon initiate a parallel review in a number of middle-income countries, again using the OECD questionnaire. The thematic review by these key partners will lead to the development of the most extensive harmonised international data base ever on guidance policy and practice.

This Synthesis Report summarises the state of play in the development of career information and guidance in both the education and labour market sector in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Experts from each of these countries wrote up a report, structured on the OECD survey and on the basis of their own knowledge of the field, and often after extensive consultation with key partners.

The broad purpose of this exercise is, first of all, to provide an account of the most recent and most significant developments, trends, challenges and major issues, as well as strengths and weaknesses of national career information and guidance systems and policies, in such a way that renders the data susceptible to comparative analysis. Secondly, the synthesis report aims to facilitate the generation of benchmarks, enabling the countries that participated in the review to gauge how well they are doing in career information and guidance provision in relation to other comparable countries, and to facilitate the sharing of good practice. Thirdly, the report should prove to be a useful tool for the development of policy, particularly as Candidate Countries have acknowledged the centrality of Lifelong Learning in their strategic response to the challenges of integration in the global economy generally, and in the EU more specifically, and the value of career information and guidance throughout life for citizens within that context.

The Synthesis Report consists of **six sections**, which closely follow the OECD outline in order to facilitate comparison between the different reports once these become available. In the Appendix, experts responsible for writing up the detailed country reports have contributed a summary providing an overview of the key elements of the national arrangements for careers information and guidance, outlining the strengths, weaknesses, issues and challenges for their systems.

The **first section** provides a background to the Commission's involvement in the career information and guidance review. It also briefly outlines the geo-political, economic and cultural contexts of the eleven countries surveyed, particularly in as far as these impact on career guidance provision.

The **second section** focuses on the **policy challenges for career information and guidance** in terms of national objectives. The latter include the upgrading of the knowledge and skills base of the population, with a view to addressing unemployment, to meeting the demands of knowledge-based economies, and to ensuring that the supply and demand of labour are in harmony. Another set of challenges arise from a social policy context that seeks to ensure equitable distribution of education and employment opportunities, with guidance services having a key role to play as active measures in combating early school leaving, facilitating the integration of at-risk groups in both education and the labour market, and reducing poverty. Governments in Candidate Countries – and to a lesser extent, the private sector – have acknowledged the important contribution that career guidance can make in reaching these educational, employment and social objectives, and have indeed launched several initiatives to underscore their commitment to the field. Nevertheless, while the discourse around career guidance has intensified, it appears that in some cases that discourse has outstripped practice, and plans tend to suffer from a deficit in implementation.

The **third section** constitutes the heart of the report, as it considers several aspects that contribute to the **more effective delivery of career guidance**. A first focus is on the services provided in the **education sector**. Here attention is given to the extent to which guidance is a stand-alone activity offered infrequently and at key transition and decision-making points, which seems to be the key modality of provision when compared to other models where guidance issues permeate the curriculum. Attention is also given to the initiatives that help bridge the school with the world of work, to the instruments used in delivering guidance, to the groups that are targeted, and to the education sectors where services are either non-existent (namely primary schooling), or where they are most present (secondary level), or where they are on the rise (tertiary level, including universities).

A second focus is on the **employment sector**, and the extent to which adults receive guidance as they negotiate occupational and further education and training trajectories in a lifelong learning society. The synthesis report highlights the fact that most adult guidance is offered in the context of Public Employment Services, and that it tends to be remedial in nature, narrowly targeted at the unemployed, with the immediate goal of finding them employment. Other key trends noted are the lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, and the minor involvement of the private sector in the provision of adult guidance, where at best they function as job-brokerage services. An aspect of guidance that has witnessed a great deal of development in most Candidate Countries is the use of ICTs to ensure more effective and widespread provision of education- and career-related information to the community. There is also a gradual trend to increased input and involvement by stakeholders, and to a shift in the modality of service whereby clients are provided with the resources to assess their needs and aspirations, and to match these with

employment opportunities. A key issue cutting across all of this section is the lack of a sound evidence base that would permit the evaluation of the effectiveness of the guidance service in reaching its objectives.

Section four considers the **human and financial resources** dedicated to career guidance. In most Candidate Countries, staff involved in offering guidance services have a higher level of education – often in psychology or the humanities – though not all have had specialised pre-service training in the field. Trends include increased opportunities for in-service training, and the gradual professionalisation of career guidance through the specification of entry and qualification routes, the articulation of clearly defined occupational roles, the drawing up of a formal code of ethics, and the formation of associations and networks that may have a research and training function. Most Candidate Countries report that the profession tends to attract women in the main, and that the qualifications and training routes for staff employed in the education sector tend to be different from those engaged in the employment sector. The information about the financial resources allocated to career guidance is extremely sketchy and inconclusive. Most of the budget for careers information and guidance services comes from the state, with few candidate countries reporting any substantial investment in the activity by the private sector.

Section five synthesises the observations made by experts from the Candidate Countries in terms of the **strategic leadership** that is exercised in the field of career guidance, and of how this could be strengthened. Despite the fact that there have been several noteworthy developments, a general conclusion that can be drawn is that there is a need for stronger mechanisms to provide co-ordination and leadership in articulating strategies for lifelong access to guidance within a national policy framework that is both dynamic and adequately resourced. As things stand at the moment, career guidance tends to be still seen by governments as a marginal activity. There is also a lot of scope for a more vigorous role for the private sector and stakeholders, in a field where, curiously, trade union input seems to be particularly weak. Little evaluation is carried out to monitor quality in service provision, or to measure effectiveness, particularly in relation to specific performance targets and outputs. While examples of good practice exist in a number of the countries surveyed, a more robust evidence base is required if guidance is to be provided in a way that responds to the distinct needs of a differentiated clientele.

Section six provides a concluding note identifying the main challenges as well as the way forward in career guidance in the countries surveyed. While none of the candidate countries, on its own, holds the key for addressing the most pressing issues that are identified, collectively they certainly provide a rich thesaurus of good practice from which policy-makers and practitioners can draw inspiration.

THE SITUATION OF CAREER GUIDANCE IN 11 CANDIDATE COUNTRIES
AN ETF SYNTHESIS REPORT
Ronald G. Sultana

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Commission's Focus on Career Guidance

1.1.1. Career guidance has been identified as one of the main priorities of action in the European Commission's Communication on Lifelong Learning.[1] As such, the Commission has decided to create **a baseline of information on the current state of policy development in career guidance** in Europe, through a survey using a dedicated questionnaire prepared by the OECD. This questionnaire has already been used with 14 countries[2] as part of an OECD thematic review, in an attempt to develop benchmarks – enabling participating countries to gauge how well they are doing in career guidance provision in relation to other comparable countries – and to facilitate the sharing of good practice, providing countries with an opportunity to promote their successes and to learn from practices elsewhere. On the basis of the proven usefulness of the OECD survey, the Commission, with the help of CEDEFOP, has extended the collection of information to the remaining EU member states, with the ETF overseeing the same exercise in relation to eleven Candidate Countries (henceforth, CCs – namely Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). The World Bank, on its part, will shortly launch a parallel review in a number of middle-income countries, again using the OECD questionnaire. The involvement of these key partners – all using the same survey tool – will lead to the development of the most extensive harmonised international database ever on guidance policy and practice.

1.1.2. The main motive behind the Commission's interest in this area is the consideration of how the organisation and delivery of occupational information and career guidance services might **advance the public policy objectives of lifelong learning and active employment and welfare policies**. Other than the collection of baseline information, the Commission has decided to set up an expert group, the European Lifelong Guidance Group, in order to provide an opportunity to key policy-makers in each member state as well as in future

[1] Commission of the European Communities (2001) *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*. COM(2001) 678, pp.17-18.
[2] The countries that took part in this review are Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the UK, Australia, Canada, and Korea. For an account of the process adopted for the purpose of this review, see R. Sweet (2001) 'Career information, guidance and counselling services: policy perspectives.' *Australian Journal of Career Development*, Vol.10(2), pp.11-14. Material related to the OECD review can be accessed at the following website: www.oecd.org/els/education/careerguidance

member states to share their experiences and to consider which initiatives might be appropriate at the European level.

1.2. Background to the Candidate Country Review

1.2.1. The present synthesis report provides an **analytic account of the most recent and most significant developments, trends, challenges and major issues, as well as strengths and weaknesses of national guidance systems and policies**, as reported by experts from the 11 CCs responsible for responding to the survey instrument designed by the OECD.[3] These experts completed their task on the basis of their own in-depth knowledge of careers guidance in their country, and in some instances after an extensive consultation exercise with key decision-makers and providers in the field. The present synthesis report strives to develop a strong **comparative dimension**: this is justified by virtue of the fact that all the countries involved in the study are one step away from accession in the EU, and their own policy-making has been greatly influenced by EU policies, including the EU Social Charter, EU Employment Action Plans, and structural indicators that focus on employment, innovation, social inclusion and economic reforms. Comparison is particularly justified in the case of the 9 CCs that have only recently embarked on a transition from a centrally planned to a democratic market economy, which means that they have to deal with "radical changes in the role of the state, the individual and the economy", which have "an immense effect on the starting point, nature, and investment in, career development".[4] Indeed, most of these countries report an intensified interest in career guidance. This is understandable, given that previously labour demand and supply were an outcome of state planning, and as a result insecurity about employment and economic futures is a relatively new experience for many citizens in central and eastern Europe.

1.2.2. Over and above similarities, however, one must not lose sight of the **very real differences – geo-political, economic and cultural –** both between and sometimes even within countries. The 11 CCs reviewed in this context include some large nations – such as Poland, Romania and Hungary; small states – such as Estonia, Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania; and micro states, with populations less than a million – such as Malta and Cyprus. At the macro level, scale can matter when, for instance, it comes to managing a decentralisation process, and to developing strong municipal career service structures operating within the framework of a steering national policy. At the micro level, scale can also matter in shaping occupational destinations, not least because small, close-knit societies are more likely to develop extensive personal networks where 'who you know' can sometimes be more decisive than 'what you know' in clinching a job. Some

[3] In drawing up this report, the work of the present author was greatly facilitated by the draft outline structure of the final OECD report co-ordinated by Richard Sweet, and by feedback provided by Helmut Zelloth (co-ordinator of the ETF project on career guidance), Haralabos Fragoulis and Jean Raymond Masson (ETF), Anthony G. Watts (OECD), as well as by the experts who wrote the respective candidate country reports.

[4] See D. H. Fretwell & P. Plant (2001) 'Career development policy models: synthesis paper.' Paper presented at the Second International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Vancouver, Canada, p.1.

of the CCs have a relatively homogeneous ethnic composition (e.g. Malta, Poland, Slovenia), others are quite multiethnic (e.g. Estonia, Latvia). Some, such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, have significant numbers of minority groups. There are also significant differences between the CCs in the per capita income they can command (with Cyprus, Malta and Slovenia going beyond the 10000 Euro threshold, with the rest ranging between 4500 and 9500 Euros per capita). In some countries, the political context encourages stakeholders to make important contributions to the policy-making process as well as to provision of services. Other states from among the CCs are more reluctant to adopt a social partnership model. Different histories, traditions, ideologies, and policy regimes have an impact on shaping the educational systems in the different CCs, with some embarking only recently in questioning centralised systems that encourage early streaming and tracking, and that seriously limit the extent to which individuals and their families can 'choose' educational and occupational trajectories. Career guidance is an old tradition in some of the countries involved in this review – that of Poland started in 1918, for instance, while guidance services were already being offered in Latvia and Lithuania in 1929 and 1931 respectively. In many other countries, however, careers guidance it is a recent service, without much of a heritage to build upon. Culturally too there are significant differences, with religion (mainly Christian – with its Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant varieties – but Muslim as well), and the family playing quite a significant role when it comes to shaping young people's futures, occupationally or otherwise. All these factors, together with the variable composition of the different countries' economies, have a significant impact on the way careers guidance is perceived, on how it is organised, on the challenges that have to be overcome, and on the issues that need to be addressed.

SECTION 2: CAREER GUIDANCE AND PUBLIC POLICY

2.1.Policy challenges for career guidance

2.1.1. Despite the diversity of socio-economic, cultural and educational contexts that mark the eleven CCs under review, **all face a broad set of similar challenges** for education, labour market and social policies that have implications for career guidance and information systems. Through a variety of national policy documents, as well as through reports and analyses produced during the process leading up to accession in the European Union, all CCs have articulated goals that include the upgrading of the knowledge and skills base of the population with a view to addressing unemployment, to meeting the demands of forward-looking knowledge-based economies, and to ensuring that the supply and demand of labour are in harmony. For those CCs emerging from the experience of decades of centrally planned economies, such challenges and goals are particularly pressing.

2.1.2. All CCs have also firmly located such goals within **a social policy context** that seeks to ensure equitable distribution of education and employment opportunities. Guidance and counselling services are indeed seen to be active measures to combat early dropping out from school, to facilitate the fuller integration of at-risk groups into both education and the labour market, and to reduce poverty.

Educational and career guidance are therefore increasingly promoted as an effective policy strategy not only to reduce gender segmentation, but also to assist persons with disability, immigrant groups, ethnic minorities, and ex-convicts to re/engage pathways that lead to fuller social and economic integration.

2.2. The special challenge of lifelong learning

2.2.1. A key consideration here is the special challenge that is being posed by lifelong learning, with **guidance being seen as a key tool facilitating personal development and employment** in relation to the need for a constant engagement with learning and training. Partly as a result of the desire to participate more effectively in the global economy, but also in response to the invitation made by the EU Commission to member and accession countries to consider its LLL Memorandum, CCs have started giving shape to a national LLL policy that has implications for the way citizens flow through and between educational and work pathways. Most CCs have in fact embarked on a set of reforms that strive to make compulsory schooling more responsive to the differentiated learning needs of students, encouraging learners to be more proactive in opting for trajectories that, while taking them closer to the world of work, nevertheless keeps them engaged in learning. Through a bevy of initiatives that include more flexible but coherent pathways, the acknowledgement of learning achievement through alternative assessment strategies that openly and transparently recognise experience and competence, and the burgeoning of opportunities for adult learning both within and away from work contexts, youths and older citizens are being encouraged to develop those skill and attitudinal profiles that will be increasingly required in post-fordist, high ability societies. There is indeed a clear recognition of the fact that as pathways become more diversified but linked, and as the openings into further education and training multiply, groups and individuals should increasingly benefit from transparent and easily accessible information, supported where appropriate by guidance.

2.3.Implications for career guidance

2.3.1. The CC reports collectively signal an **increasing realisation** on the part of government – though, apparently, less so on the part of the private sector – that career information and guidance, both in and through education as well as the labour market, are central to any policy that seeks to increase access to learning, to bolster learning completion rates, to increase the national stock of skills, to ensure their flexible deployment both nationally and Europe-wide, to reduce unemployment, and to enhance the individual's employability through competent career management. At the present moment, and in most of the CCs, the realisation that occupational guidance is a market-economy facilitator and also a potentially effective instrument to combat social exclusion tends to be more readily sustained by **formal declarations** – and such policy steering mechanisms as new legal provisions – than by actual practice. Thus, while the *discourse* around career guidance has intensified, in the case of many CCs that discourse has outstripped actual practice. This will become clear as a synthesis of the main

problems and challenges that career guidance has to face is presented throughout this report. However, it must also be kept in mind that the writing of this synthesis is akin to shooting a moving target: changes are taking place all the time, and it is difficult to keep up with all the developments in policy implementation.

2.3.2. At this stage, however, it should be noted that several developments have been reported by different CCs indicating **the attractiveness of career guidance as an important tool** for helping to achieve the range of education, labour market and social objectives outlined earlier. Such developments will be highlighted throughout this report, and include:

- The promulgation of legal instruments promoting career guidance and stipulating it as a right of citizens (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia).
- The extension of careers guidance services to new client groups, such as higher education students (e.g. Estonia, Poland, Romania), students or registered unemployed with disabilities (e.g. Bulgaria, Slovakia), those already in employment (e.g. Latvia), and parents (e.g. Cyprus).
- The enhancement of access to services through regional provision (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Poland).
- The enhancement of access to services, in practically all the CCs, through ICT and internet provision.
- The development of new tools, such as aptitude testing services (e.g. Cyprus, Malta).
- The creative reconstitution of guidance services away from traditional paradigms, in such a way as to offer integrated services in modalities that encourage clients to be more proactive in their search for information and in their decision-making (e.g. the CIPS, or Vocational Information and Counselling Centres in Slovenia).
- The articulation of professional qualification standards for career counsellors (e.g. Estonia, Malta, Poland).
- The establishment – or intensification of activities of – career guidance associations (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania).
- The attempt to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration (e.g. through the establishment of *National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance – Euroguidance Networks* in the CCs; and through the development of strategic plans to build up an integrated career guidance system, as in Poland).

SECTION 3: DELIVERING CAREER GUIDANCE MORE EFFECTIVELY

3.1. Meeting the needs of young people in schools and tertiary education

3.1.1. In most CCs, as is the case internationally, **much career guidance takes place in the context of the school**, in post-compulsory education settings, and increasingly in universities. By far the greatest provision is made at the secondary school level, to the extent that in Latvia, for instance, schools at this level can only be accredited if they have vocational guidance activities. Generally speaking, little if any careers guidance or education is provided at the primary school level – Slovenia and Slovakia are exceptions among the CCs in this regard. The timing of educational

and vocational guidance provision tends to depend on the stage at which key decisions have to be made by students as they flow through the pathways offered. Most often, therefore, service delivery is tied to immediate decisions that have to be made, rather than seen as a seamless process accompanying students throughout their stay at school and beyond.

3.1.2. While some of the CCs have **specialised staff** to provide career guidance services in schools (e.g. Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia), this is by no means the case for all. Slovakia does not have an occupational category to fulfil career guidance roles, which are entrusted to regular teachers. In some cases (e.g. Latvia, and to a lesser extent, Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania), the class teacher is a key player in the provision of services at the secondary school level, even though he or she is not necessarily trained in school-to-work transition matters. This leads to recourse to specialised career guidance services *outside* the school (e.g. teachers in Latvia refer students to Professional Career Counselling Centres). In Lithuania, school psychologists are expected to also provide vocational guidance, but in reality, the latter service is mainly delivered to students by Labour Market Training and Counselling personnel. Across all CCs, **staff tend to have multiple roles,** often finding themselves obliged to provide the whole range of guidance services – including personal counselling and educational guidance – rather than focusing solely on career issues. Given the fact that many of the staff in guidance have a psychology background, and given that schools are increasingly the site where young people act out their frustrations, there is a tendency for personal counselling concerns to crowd out career guidance.

3.1.3. At the secondary education level, a number of CCs report that career education, information and guidance is also offered ***through the curriculum*** (i.e. by formally allocating the area space in the weekly or semestrial time-table – such as in Romania, and to a lesser extent in Cyprus), or ***across the curriculum*** (i.e. by formally addressing work-related issues in different subjects – such as in Latvia, Malta, and Poland). None of the CC reports referred to cross-departmental curriculum development strategies facilitating co-ordinated efforts in career guidance by different subject teachers. While this might happen on an *ad hoc* basis, or as part of a curricular project within an innovative school, such activities are not prominent or common enough to be highlighted by any of the CCs. In some cases, there is a desire to strengthen the bond between the world of work and the curriculum. This is the declared intention in Slovakia's National Employment Plan, for instance, and in Malta's new National Curriculum.

3.1.4. Taken one level further, career guidance as an activity does not yet seem to be considered as part and parcel of the overall organisation of the educational institution – what might be referred to as a **'whole-school approach' to guidance**. Neither can we yet talk of the appearance of the **'guidance-oriented school'**, where the function of careers staff is not merely that of helping young people make the immediate choices in relation to further study, training or work, but also to promote the skills and attitudes that are required by lifelong learning and lifelong occupational development. Thus, not only is it rare to find a clearly

articulated role for the career education curriculum within the general school programme of studies; it is also rare to have a clearly articulated role for other members of staff or the community more generally to make an input in career guidance. In most CCs, alumni, parents, employers and, to a lesser extent, trade union leaders, occasionally visit schools and universities to share their knowledge and skills with young people. In particular, employers often provide job-related information, which is generally made available in career guidance rooms or at career fairs or seminars. Generally speaking, employers and trade union representatives make an input at career fairs or exhibitions, which are organised in practically all CCs, often at a national level. However, while there are some excellent initiatives in stakeholder input (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), such involvement tends to be sporadic and dependent on the personal initiatives of institutions or individuals rather than part of any institutionalised mechanism for co-ordination, delivery or policy-making.

3.1.5. Some of the CCs provide **'work shadowing'** and **'work experience'** type activities to secondary level students in order to help them gain first-hand knowledge of the world of work. While in most cases the organisation of such activities depends on the initiatives taken by individual guidance staff or schools, there are instances where there are central policy leads in this direction. Estonia, for instance, has a 'work shadowing day' organised annually on a national level. There is some evidence that these kinds of activities are on the increase (e.g. Latvia). Cyprus, for instance, has introduced a one week placement in work contexts for Grade 11 students, and is planning to introduce summer work placements as well. Lithuania has also introduced 15 hours of work experience at Grade 11 and another 15 hours at Grade 12. Such initiatives are however more common in VET-type schools, as is the case with Bulgaria and Slovakia. Other CCs have developed within-school programmes that encourage students to set up businesses, helping them learn entrepreneurial skills experientially, under the guidance or mentorship of established members of the business community. Latvia and Estonia, for instance, participate in Junior Achievement, while Malta has the Young Enterprise scheme, as well as the SCOOPS (Co-Ops in Schools) project.

3.1.6. Career guidance is provided both to individuals and within the context of group settings. The **predominance of a psychological orientation** towards vocational guidance in most CCs means, however, that the former mode of delivery is more common. Guidance seems to be generally interpreted as an intervention in the process of constructing one's occupational identity in view/on the basis of individual characteristics and aspirations. The focus on individual self-fulfilment, while positive, tends to obscure the way social and gender experiences structure desires and trajectories. Group career guidance, besides facilitating the linkage between the personal and the social in the decision-making process, has the added advantage of ensuring wider access to services. As many of the country reports note, schools are generally failing to satisfy student demand for guidance, as the staff to pupil ratio is inadequate if the only or **primary modality of provision is based on the individual guidance interview** (e.g. the ratio is 1:800 in Cypriot

Lyceums and TVE schools). There are, however, a number of examples of good practice which could provide a useful contrast to the sole reliance on individual provision: in addition to the curricular programmes already noted, Malta and Poland, for instance, organise occupational orientation workshops and seminars for groups of students during their final year of secondary schooling.

3.1.7. Much of the emphasis across all education sectors in the CCs appears to be on *provision* of service. One however notes that the idea of making resources and contexts available in order to encourage and enable young people to engage in **self-directed career exploration** is slowly gaining ground. Pen-and-pencil (e.g. Cyprus, Malta) and, less often, computer-based self-assessment tests (e.g. Slovenia) are used in some schools. Some CCs – notably Slovenia and Romania – have indeed articulated a policy commitment to a shift in the modality of provision, encouraging self-help, self-evaluation, and computer-based strategies, with the client to feature more centrally in the decision-making process.

3.1.8. Across all CCs there is an aspiration to offer guidance services to one and all. However, given scarcity of both human and material resources, decisions have often to be made to **target priority groups**. Some target VET track students – at Grade 10 level, for instance, Hungary provides career guidance services exclusively to VET students. However, other CCs (e.g. Slovakia) do not give priority to students in the VET track, considering that they are not in as great a need of career guidance, since the assumption is that they have already made their occupational choices.

3.1.9. Careers guidance is generally underdeveloped in many of the **universities** in the CCs, though there is a clear trend towards setting up or increasing services. Where guidance is already offered – as in Poland through its university career bureaux – specialised staff have a very broad remit, often having to provide a whole range of guidance services, including personal counselling, study skills, stress management, information about different courses on offer, and the career pathways such courses open up. Some services – including support in applications for employment, training for interviews, job brokerage, and graduate placement – are offered by student associations, either to complement the work done by the established careers office, or in order to make up for a deficit. Romania has developed a particularly strong programme for its university sector, and is the only one of all CCs to offer a specialised career orientation curriculum to tertiary level students, focusing on counselling during the first year of studies, and on information during the subsequent year. Some university career services also organise tracer studies with graduates in order to be in a better position to guide students regarding likely employment trajectories after finishing a degree (e.g. Estonia, Malta).

3.2. Meeting the career guidance needs of out-of-school youth

3.2.1. Most countries target **early school-leavers and school drop-outs** in an attempt to ensure that these benefit from specialised guidance services, with a view to

reintegrating them within education and/or training programmes as quickly as possible. As the OECD thematic review has noted, services for this group of clients tend to be most successful when they involve a highly individualised approach where personal, educational and occupational guidance are interwoven together. It is most effective when service providers implement outreach programmes which, while articulated within – and co-ordinated by – a highly developed central policy approach, make good use of local resources that are closest to this target group, and work hand in hand with other providers across different sectors, including schools and community associations.

3.2.2. CCs generally do highlight the needs of this particular group of young people, but **have not developed a successful strategy** to respond to needs. In some cases, as in Slovenia, the problem lies with the fact that guidance services tend to be seen by school drop-outs as part of the system that they have negative experiences of, and which they have abandoned. Schools too might not be too keen to welcome back young people who are perceived to be troublesome. This also partly explains why in most cases, unemployed school-age youth tend to be catered for by the public employment service rather than by school-based guidance services. In Malta and Romania, for instance, young people are offered skills training and basic literacy courses, as well as programmes that attempt to help clients re-build their self-image in order to re-engage with learning and to plan a life path. Overall, however, **none of the CCs reported any sustained attempt** to ensure collaboration between the education and labour market sectors, and between these and the community, in an effort **to generate an effective response to the specific needs of out-of-school youth**.

3.3. Meeting the career guidance needs of adults

3.3.1. Most of the career guidance that is addressed towards adults takes place within the context of **public employment services** (PES), and in most cases, the service provided targets unemployed persons. As such, while providers do attempt to meet a whole range of needs, and do try to fulfil a broad remit of responsibilities, the focus of personnel in CCs seems to largely be on training for employability, on information-giving, and on job brokerage rather than on careers guidance. An exception is Latvia, where Professional Career Counselling Centres outside the PES provide a service for both unemployed and employed students and adults. PES personnel are typically overburdened with multiple roles (e.g. Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, and Slovakia), where the main task appears to be that of channelling the unemployed towards training and re-training tracks, of informing them about employment opportunities, and of acting as mediators and brokers between them and potential employers. They may also be engaged (as in Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, for instance) in group-based activities that encourage the unemployed to become more motivated and more skilled in looking for work (e.g. job clubs, writing CVs, self-presentation strategies during interviews, positive thinking, and so on). The main goal is often to combat long-term unemployment, and notable success has been achieved in some cases in this regard (e.g. Slovenia's 14 Job Clubs – where guidance is part of a set of strategies

– have an impressive success rate, with an average of 55% of long-term unemployed clients finding work within six months).

3.3.2. Some of the PES in CCs offer **further services that are more directly connected to career guidance**. Poland's Poviat labour offices, for instance, together with the 51 Centres for Career Information and Planning in Voivodship Labour offices, are very well resourced, and provide a range of services both to those who are unemployed, and those who are at risk of losing their jobs. Similarly, Lithuania, through its Labour Exchanges and its Labour Market Training Authorities, offers programmes that seem to give due importance to the vocational development of clients. Slovenia too offers employment counselling over and above the range of information-based services that are common to many PES, and has a team of trained career counsellors who help the unemployed and long-term unemployed come up with an employment plan.

3.3.3. All in all, however, as is the case with several other countries internationally,[5] career guidance services for adults tend to be **remedial in nature**, and **narrowly targeted** at the unemployed and the long term unemployed, with the **immediate goal** of finding them employment. In contrast to this would be a proactive approach, addressing a much wider group, and utilising the whole range of guidance functions[6] to help all adults sustain employability and respond flexibly to change. While several of the CCs report that the concept of lifelong guidance is increasingly referred to in national debates – particularly in response to the LLL Memorandum of the European Commission – **there has, as yet, been little impact of that debate on actual policy and practice in the field of adult career guidance**. None of the CC reports, for instance, referred to **leisure, third age, or retirement counselling**, which are bound to become critically important given the implications of the demographic structure in Europe. It is only in a few of the **larger enterprises** in the CCs that we find a guidance service offered to personnel – often within HRD departments or units – with a view to helping them to make progress in their career, or to switch tracks due to either changing interests or changes in the skills profiles required by the company.

3.3.4. Career guidance for adults is sometimes offered by **trade unions**, though in most cases, such provision is informal, offered by union staff who have no training in guidance, and targeted largely at union members who are at risk of unemployment due to restructuring (e.g. Romania, and more modestly Cyprus, Estonia and Malta). Most often, however, trade unions are only represented at a national level on bodies that cater for social partnership (e.g. Bulgaria), and negotiate on behalf

[5] See A.G. Watts (2002) 'Policy and practice in career guidance: an international perspective.' Keynote speech delivered to the Institute of Career Guidance Annual Conference, Ashford, Kent, 5-7 September 2002, p.6.

[6] Drawing on a number of sources, Plant identifies a range of 15 activities that constitute career guidance. These are: informing, advising, assessing, teaching, enabling, advocating, networking, feeding back, managing, innovation/systems change, signposting, mentoring, sampling work experience or learning tasters, and following up. See P. Plant (2001) 'Quality in careers guidance.' A paper commissioned jointly by the European Commission and the OECD, prepared for the OECD review of policies for information, guidance and counselling services.

of members facing mass redundancies and the effects of privatisation. They sometimes support vocational guidance, entrepreneurial education, and courses in job-search techniques – but their actual involvement in career guidance is minimal overall.

3.3.5. Other guidance services are very occasionally offered by **private employment services**. These are largely underdeveloped in most of the CCs, though governments appear to be increasingly keen to outsource to the private sector (e.g. Cyprus, Estonia, and Hungary; Slovenia's employment services also outsource aspects of the mandate of Job Clubs to private providers). In most cases, private provision has only appeared in the past decade, and is only now becoming established (e.g. Poland). Such services are most likely to be focused on finding, selecting and placing personnel in highly qualified and specialised labour niches (as in Romania, for instance). Typically – and as is the case in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia – private employment services in CCs act as job brokers and head-hunters rather than as fully-fledged providers of guidance and counselling. While their job-matching approach responds to the immediate needs of clients in search of work, none of the CCs report that there is much enthusiasm to make use of this fee-paying service by adults as yet.

3.3.6. Adults can access career guidance services in at least two other ways. First, if they are students following courses in **tertiary level institutions**, they can benefit from advisory services that increasingly feature in universities and colleges. Second, in some countries, **community-based associations** provide services to specific groups, especially if these are the target of national equity policies. Few of the latter initiatives were reported by the CCs, where the main agent remains the state, with one example being provided by Bulgaria and its Open Society Fund.

3.4. Widening community access through more and innovative diverse delivery

3.4.1. In the context of compulsory-level schooling, and as noted earlier, access to career counselling and guidance has been improved in some of the CCs through the **insertion of a transition-to-work curricular area** (e.g. Romania, Cyprus), **or of work-related themes across the curriculum** (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Malta, and Poland). This has also encouraged the provision of group-based rather than merely individual-based guidance, ensuring wider access to greater numbers of students.

3.4.2. Practically all CCs report the increasing **use of ICT** in order to more widely disseminate information about occupations, and in some cases to support guidance functions and to enable interactive career decision-making via CD-based software, career navigation systems, or the internet. In most cases, the use of ICT complements rather than replaces traditional forms of provision, such as face-to-face interviews, leaflets and brochures carrying occupational profiles, and so on. While, as is perhaps to be expected, many of the CCs adopt software that has been developed in more economically advanced countries which have a longer guidance tradition (e.g. Romania uses Canadian software, 'Interoptions', while

Slovakia and Slovenia used an adapted version of the British software 'Adult Directions'), there are several instances where material has been produced locally, to reflect the realities of the indigenous labour market, and to respond more effectively to the country's specific human resource development needs. One could here mention Poland's 'Counsellor 2000' software, which permits a multi-dimensional analysis of occupations, stimulates clients' efforts, and assists them in choosing an appropriate job. A similar example is Slovakia's 'Guide to the World of Occupations'. This software was developed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme in co-operation with the Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus and the United Kingdom.

3.4.3. Several of the larger CCs note that it has proved difficult for them to deliver career information and guidance in the remoter regions, and that ICT represents a very powerful tool to overcome such barriers. This is particularly true if, rather than just providing information about the nature of occupations and about vacancies, the software allows self-exploration, self-assessment of vocational interests and abilities, interactive sessions with counsellors, and so on, with the internet providing a portal into a broad and flexible network of inter-linked services.[7] **'Distance career counselling'** is therefore increasingly on the agenda (e.g. Poland, Romania – but also in several other CCs, where the guidance function is being integrated in websites, e.g. Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia). However, one needs to constantly keep in mind the equity dimension in web-based guidance services, given the differential state of penetration of IT and internet across the population. ICT has, in some cases, also proved very powerful in enabling the integration of all relevant and related data in one, internet-based system (e.g. Estonia).

3.4.4. One can also note a shift, in several of the CCs, from an approach that emphasises provision, to one that encourages and enables clients to access services pro-actively, and to engage in a **self-service mode** (e.g. the Vocational Information Counselling Centres – CIPS – in Slovenia). Some of the best examples in the use of ICT facilitate such a shift, but self-help methods have also been promoted through the use of self-administered decision-making tools and self-scoring assessment instruments, and the organisation of career guidance facilities in such a way that clients can access information and engage in self-exploration on their own, asking for an individual interview with counsellors only if and when they need to. Some CCs, such as Cyprus, have set up internet points in youth clubs and other centres where young people tend to gather, offering a self-service approach to analysis of aptitudes and interests, and to matching profiles with vacancies and further training opportunities.

3.4.5. Several of the CCs report the use of newspapers, T.V., mass media, road bill-boards, and other **advertising strategies and outlets** in order to ensure that occupation-related information reaches a wider range of people in the community.

[7] See A.G. Watts (2001) 'The role of information and communication technologies in an integrated career information and guidance system.' A paper commissioned jointly by the European Commission and the OECD, prepared for the OECD review of policies for information, guidance and counselling services.

In many CCs, the press features supplements on careers, advertises job vacancies and further education and training opportunities, as well as information about overall labour market trends.

3.4.6. In some cases, **call-centre technology** is being used to good effect, enabling clients to phone in queries (e.g. Lithuania). In most cases, however, such call-in services tend to be used to provide psychological and personal support (i.e. help-line counselling, as in Malta) rather than career guidance.

3.4.7. The issue of widely spread out populations in remote regions in some of the CCs poses a serious challenge to the delivery of guidance services and work-related information to all citizens. Other than the use of ICTs, some are attempting to overcome the problem by having **outreach services to remote areas** (Estonia). Some (e.g. Hungary) are finding that the demand for the service is not sufficiently high to justify the presence of an expert on a permanent basis, and are considering providing the service during times of the year when the demand is high. Others have developed peripatetic counselling team service to respond to unsatisfied demand. A case in point would be Latvia, which has mobile teams to make up for the fact that it has Professional Career Counselling Centres in only 19 of 26 of its regions.

3.4.8. Practically all CCs report initiatives on the part of educational institutions that invite alumni, parents, as well as business and community leaders into the school so that these share their experience and knowledge of the world of work with students. They are also sometime involved in arranging student visits to their enterprises. While in most cases such activities depend on the personal initiative of a guidance officer or of the school itself, there are countries where the **input of stakeholders** is more formalised. Hungary, for instance, has active Parent Organisations that provide students and parents with information about educational and occupational pathways. At higher education levels, student organisations and associations are increasingly active in providing career-related information, particularly where, as in Estonia, there is a lack of government-funded provision.

3.5. Providing career information more effectively

3.5.1. Information is at the core of career guidance and education, and indeed tends to prevail over other guidance functions. From the point of view of the client, information should lead to improved knowledge about self, about the labour market, about education and training opportunities and pathways, and about the ways in which all these elements interact together. Most CCs report that the **formal responsibility for the provision of such information lies largely with the state**: government agencies collect the information, organise it, and disseminate it. Information is often published at a national level, with data fed to a centre via a network of regional and local providers. Typically, such information includes classification of occupations, occupational descriptions, macroeconomic indicators and labour market trends, and so on. Much of this information is

distributed free of charge through educational and training institutions, labour offices, at career fairs and exhibitions, and via community-based organisations and libraries. Some of the information is produced at a local or regional level, either by training centres or, occasionally, by employers themselves. On a different scale, guidance staff within educational institutions sometimes produce their own information brochures, leaflets and internet sites (e.g. Slovenia, Malta).

3.5.2. Much of the information is **print-based**, but increasingly there is a trend for it to be also – or exclusively – produced **in ICT format**, as CD-Roms, on diskette, or on the internet. Production costs are thus minimised substantially, and the task of up-dating information is rendered more feasible. Otherwise expensive films which provide qualitative information about the experience of working in particular occupations can be downloaded via the internet by clients at little or no cost (e.g. Hungary, Lithuania). Several of the CC report that the potential of ICT-based career information is still being tapped, with the tendency being to give more importance to amount of information than to its adequate design. Thus, the information about educational and training pathways, and the relevant occupations they lead to, are not always linked to each other, or to the personal profile of the client using the system. Such a system, integrating the most recent developments in Artificial Intelligence that link information management with decision-making strategies, is being developed by Poland. Slovakia too is engaged in a similar endeavour, in collaboration with eight other countries and under the auspices of a Leonardo da Vinci project. Often, however, websites end up being nothing more than a replica of print-based materials. Furthermore, ICT-based information does not tend to be directed to a specific category of client. A rare exception reported by the CCs is the modification of a multimedia application – 'Counsellor 2000' – that permits a multi-dimensional analysis of occupations while guiding a client to choose an appropriate job, and which has also been adapted for use by persons with disabilities (Poland).

3.5.3. **Connectivity** between career and educational information on the one hand, and labour market data – such as vulnerability to unemployment, earnings compared to minimum salary – seems to be quite rare in most of the CCs, with Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania being the exceptions.

3.5.4. Often, **different ministries** – notably those of education and of labour – **collect different information**, and it is not always the case that these different data sets are consolidated and linked in such a way that helps the client make better sense of options and opportunities. Estonia has attempted to deal with this by organising joint seminars between those responsible from the two ministries, in order to ensure common standards. Bulgaria has passed a law specifying the nature of co-ordination that must exist between different ministries in the delivery of career guidance services. On its part, Slovakia has a formal agreement on co-operation in career guidance, making it mandatory for the two ministries to set up a system of interconnected information on VET and the labour market, and encouraging co-operation between and among institutions at national, regional, district and local levels.

3.5.5. In most cases, **the state remains the standard-setter and guarantor of quality in information provision**. Some CCs have formalised procedures in order to ensure that information is both correct and timely. Thus, some regulate the quality of information provided through legal measures and instruments (e.g. Estonia's Public Information Act), others have developed strategies to ensure accuracy through systematic comparison of data from different sectors (e.g. Lithuania), while others have developed quality standards (e.g. Bulgaria, Slovenia), with groups of experts monitoring the production of data along set criteria. In some cases (e.g. Poland) clients are asked to comment about the user-friendliness of the information package they have been provided with, particularly when this is web-based. More rarely, as with Bulgaria, material is trialled out with target groups and evaluated by experts.

3.5.6. While most CCs **produce** their own career-related information, others **buy**, **translate** and **adapt** software or even print-based material. As noted in Section 3.4.2., Slovakia and Slovenia use an adapted version of the UK produced 'Adult Directions' programme, with Slovenia investing a great deal of effort to build national databases (including job descriptions and details of its own educational system) to ensure that the UK programme reflected national realities. Other CCs have been able to develop highly sophisticated information systems with the help of agencies such as the World Bank (e.g. Poland, Romania). One of the challenges that CCs have to face, particularly in situations where systems have been set up with the help of donor agencies, is that of regularly updating the information after the source of external funds has dried up.

3.5.7. Several CCs report that, while the state remains the key guarantor of the production and dissemination of career-related information, it is increasingly willing to **outsource** to specialised government agencies or foundations (e.g. the Foundation for Vocational Education and Training Reform that among other HRD projects runs Euroguidance and the National Observatory in Estonia), to non-profit organisations (e.g. the Open Society Fund in Bulgaria), or to private for-profit enterprises. The latter have not entered the information market in any major way, often restricting their activities to producing educational and occupational guides and manuals. Exceptions to the rule seem to be Romania – and to some extent, Slovakia – where the private sector operates several web sites that are accessible to clients at a fee.

3.5.8. Much of the energy in most CCs seems to go in the production and dissemination of information, with relatively **little being known about the extent to which clients access it, understand it, connect it to their frameworks of relevance, and actually use it to implement life goals**. Little is also known in CCs – and in other countries, for that matter – about the cost-effectiveness of the different modes of information production and dissemination, in relation to use and impact.

SECTION 4: RESOURCING CAREER GUIDANCE

4.1. Staffing career guidance

4.1.1. There is **a great deal of variety within and between CCs** in terms of the level and nature of qualifications and training required of those who provide career guidance. This ranges from no specific requirements at all, other than a few hours of in-service training (e.g. PES staff in Malta), to the stipulation of high levels of training, including a Masters degree for practitioners in the area, as in the case of Poland and Romania. Most CCs require career guidance staff to have a first degree, often in psychology or pedagogy, or else in sociology or social work. **Entry into the career guidance field** in the educational sector – where requirements tend to be more clearly stipulated – is often accomplished on the basis of what authorities consider to be a relevant degree, together with experience in schools. Some in-service courses are generally offered. Most CCs do not offer a specific university-level degree or diploma in career guidance. At best, as in Latvia, those with a psychology degree may have followed a module on the psychological bases of guidance – a module that is only offered in some universities. The main exceptions here are Poland, which offers a host of specialised short and long certificate-awarding courses – including postgraduate studies – in career counselling, and Cyprus, Latvia and Malta, which offer short courses in the same area of specialisation. Poland has also developed a draft 'description and standards of professional qualifications for careers counsellors', specifying the requirements for personnel working within both education and labour sectors, and is presently working on a Leonardo da Vinci programme that will lead to an equivalence of certification for career guidance staff in Poland, Germany, Austria and Hungary.

4.1.2. There is often **a distinction in the background** of those providing career guidance in **education settings**, and those working in **public employment services**. Generally speaking, as has been noted in a review of practice in 23 countries,[8] there is no mutual recognition of guidance qualifications between the education and labour market sectors. Staff providing career guidance in labour offices often have a psychology degree, but some have degrees in law, economics and engineering (e.g. Romania). Furthermore, **in-service opportunities** that offer guidance-specific training seem to be more available in PES than in the educational sector. This is partly due to the fact that pre-service training for PES workers is generally lacking, and also because dealing with the unemployed is often at the top of a government's funding priorities. Additionally, the process of accession to the EU has enabled PES guidance staff to participate in international visits and internships in the context of such programmes as ACADEMIA, and due to the setting up of the EUROGUIDANCE network. Staff from the central and

[8] See J. McCarthy (2001) 'The skills, training and qualifications of guidance workers.' A paper commissioned jointly by the European Commission and the OECD, prepared for the OECD review of policies for information, guidance and counselling services.

eastern European candidate countries have also benefited from training modules in guidance, developed in the framework of PHARE projects.

4.1.3. The **private sector of guidance services is generally unregulated**, and none of the CCs report any specific requirements in terms of training and qualifications.

4.1.4. In most cases, career guidance in CCs is **not yet professionalised** – i.e., it is not often offered by staff who have specialised and regulated career guidance qualifications, with clear entry and qualification routes into clearly defined occupational roles, and supported by an extensive network of professional associations and research and training organisations. Notable exceptions are Poland and Romania, where career counselling has been added to the Classification of Occupations and Trades. In Poland too, there have been important developments in the provision of a variety of study routes giving access to employment as a career guidance officer. It is rare to find a clearly articulated career development structure for guidance staff, with facilities for progression from the less expert to the more expert worker. Lithuania and Romania are exceptions among the CCs in this regard. Romania and Estonia are also among the few countries that report having para-professional categories – such as Youth Information Officers – to support the work of qualified guidance staff. Such para-professionals, together with non-professionals (e.g. significant adults and peers, who often work with the 'hard to reach'), and 'linked professionals' (e.g. social workers) can, if trained, consolidate the occupational identity of careers guidance workers, and further ensure access to services on the part of all.

4.1.5. **Occupational roles, and clear codes of practice and of ethics**, are often not formally defined or regulated by legally-binding documents. As already noted, careers guidance staff in schools, and to a lesser extent in labour offices, tend to have to respond to a broad range of responsibilities, with the counselling function often overwhelming the career guidance one. In some cases, as in Malta for instance, careers guidance staff spend a proportion of their time in teaching subjects unrelated to school-to-work transition.

4.1.6. Few CCs have attempted to develop a **competence framework** outlining what is needed by career guidance staff, though examples of good practice in this area are provided by Estonia, Malta, and especially by Poland. There is a realisation that the competence base of guidance personnel has to reflect changing demands, including skills in ICT, in project management, in networking and international cooperation, and in responding to an increasingly differentiated clientele. New skills are also needed in order to reconceptualise and reorganise careers guidance as an activity that is increasingly based on self-help techniques. A competency approach could counteract the tendency that guidance workers attend to work tasks which have been stressed by the type of training they have had, rather than in response to client needs.

4.1.7. Most CCs report that, while it is difficult to assemble reliable information about the **size and age composition of the career guidance force**, there is little doubt

that by far the greater number of workers in this area are female. This can be as high as 90% and over (e.g. Poland, in both education sector and PES). As with all other professions that become **feminised**, this trend has implications for occupational identity, for the status accorded to the activity by society, and consequently for the salaries and resources it will be able to command.

4.1.8. CCs report a tendency for the development of **professional associations** of career guidance staff. In some cases, as in Romania, a special section dedicated to vocational guidance has been established within an already existing Psychology Association. Lithuania has plans to move in the same direction, while Cyprus, Latvia and Poland already have their own Association of Educational and Career Guidance Counsellors.

4.1.9. Little information has been provided by the CCs as to the qualifications and background of guidance-related personnel in **private employment services**. Most often, however, they tend to have a background in human resource development and management.

4.2. Funding

4.2.1. As is the case for most countries internationally, it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide estimates concerning **national expenditure on career guidance** in the CCs. A reason for this is that government budgets rarely provide information regarding expenditure. Another reason is that career guidance is only one from a whole range of activities that the relevant staff provide, and expenditure is not recorded separately for each of these activities. Thus, for instance, several CCs note that there is no differentiation in central records regarding how much is spent on guidance-related activities in public employment services, and how much is spent on career guidance as such. Similarly, when central budgets are allocated to regions or to specific institutions such as schools, there is no readily-available record of how much of these funds go to which activity. Information about the extent of expenditure by the private sector on career guidance is even more limited.

4.2.2. In most CCs, career guidance activities and provision is **almost entirely funded by the state**, with guidance services being provided free of charge in both the education and labour sectors. In only a very few cases, certain aspects of guidance are provided at minimal cost charged to the beneficiary – this is the case for some forms of therapy in Romania, for instance. Funds are often made available centrally, directly from the government budget. Sometimes, funds are devolved to regions or to institutions, which are then free to allocate resources as they deem fit. In some cases, the region out-sources provision, subcontracting service delivery to community organisations, private companies or not-for-profit organisations (e.g. Estonia).

4.2.3. Only rarely do we find cases where the **private sector** contributes to the funding of a service offered by the state. The Cypriot HRD Authority, for instance,

finances its activities (including the collection of occupational information) by imposing a levy of 0,5% on the payroll of all private and semi-public companies and organisations. In Poland, the employers' contribution is made through a 2.45% levy of the payroll, thus financing a labour fund which includes guidance activities under active measures.

4.2.4. Another source for funding of career guidance activities in CCs comes through **external agencies**. Most often, this is accessed through involvement in EU programmes, such as Leonardo da Vinci and PHARE. Most pre-accession countries, like EU member states, have set up National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance in the Euroguidance Network, with funds being made available by government in collaboration with the EU Commission. Both Poland and Romania have benefited from World Bank funding in order to develop their career guidance systems and resources. As noted in section 3.5.6., sustainability issues arise once such external funding comes to an end.

SECTION 5: IMPROVING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

5.1. Strategic leadership

5.1.1. The review of the 11 CCs shows that career guidance has become increasingly present on the agenda of governments. Overall, however, and despite real progress achieved, career guidance tends to be still seen by governments as a marginal activity. As a result, it is rare to find **determined strategic leadership**, with provision sustained by a clearly articulated national policy framework that is both dynamic and adequately resourced. The picture that emerges from the CC reports is that when governments have provided policy directions, they have done so through the enactment or revision of legislation and through the issuing of formal documents, and have been somewhat less ready to follow through with funding, or with ensuring improved services to clients. This is somewhat understandable given the severe budgetary restraints that many of the CCs have to exercise. In some cases – and especially so in eastern and central European CCs – the deficit in strategic leadership can at least also partly be attributed to the lack of expertise within Ministries (e.g. Estonia), where bureaucratic inertia and a reluctance to give up old ways of doing things leads to a policy torpor. It is therefore clear that there is a **need for stronger mechanisms to provide co-ordination and leadership in articulating strategies for lifelong access to guidance**. Such mechanisms would draw together the relevant ministries as well as professional bodies and stakeholders, enabling local, regional and national levels to interact for the benefit of clients. The National Forum for Vocational Guidance, described in the Polish report, seems to approximate closely to such a mechanism. Other steering institutions reported by CCs include the National Career Orientation Council in Hungary.

5.1.2. The Polish case also highlights the fact that government strategic leadership is particularly required in **the context of decentralisation**. While it is true that the EU policy regime promotes decentralisation through its privileging of the concept of subsidiarity, and that giving more power and responsibility to the locale

encourages ownership of challenges and initiatives to overcome them, it is also a fact that devolution of responsibilities within a policy vacuum can lead to costly overlap, excessive disparity that give rise to inequalities, and a deficit in standards. In the case of Poland, the winding down of the national network of labour offices in favour of local government provision has led to a serious deterioration in the quality of provision. Decentralisation can also be a convenient mechanism to devolve responsibilities to local government without passing on the necessary funding, as is noted in the report for Latvia. Both the Polish and Latvia experiences support the view that the best way forward may very well be to have a judicious mix of centralised and decentralised models, where municipalities develop their own policy in the context of central guidelines that have been arrived at after wide consultation with stakeholders. Estonia seems to have adopted such a model, stipulating contracts between central and regional government to avoid problems of great variability between regions.

5.2. Evidence and data

5.2.1. Evidence and relevant data are necessary if governments and other stakeholders are to **assess the effectiveness of career guidance services in meeting public policy objectives**. While there are some examples of good practice in this regard among the CCs reviewed, the greater majority do not appear to have the capacity to generate the data indicators regarding the impact of the services provided. It must be said that research on the impact of career guidance is difficult to do well: it is hard to observe directly, and in any case, there are so many variables that have an impact on career decision-making that causality is difficult to establish, especially when issues of effectiveness are being considered. The outcomes that career guidance tries to achieve are also not often easily subject to measurement – particularly in national contexts where, like in most CCs, there are no specialised institutions or centres to carry out systematic research in this area. At best, thesis or research projects on specific aspects of guidance have been produced within university departments (e.g. Romania) or by professional associations where these exist, but such reports tend to be one-off occurrences that give a snapshot in time and are not produced on a regular basis permitting cumulative research. Some countries generate annual reports that are submitted by the relevant departments to central and/or regional government, but their usefulness to policy-makers is often limited. The capacity to produce research data is particularly limited in the smaller of the CCs, and even when such data is produced, it is often not exploited to the full. Thus, Malta expends a great deal of resources to carry out a tracer study with all its school leavers, but the information gathered is hardly ever used to steer policy-making. Some of the CCs report government intentions to invest more heavily in research on career guidance (e.g. Lithuania, Malta, Poland), particularly in the services offered through the public employment agencies.

5.2.2. Those countries that have generated data can provide governments with a variety of useful statistics and information that may be considered in the process of policy-making. **Such data include the following:**

- *The number of users of services, including their characteristics (such as age, gender, region, socio-economic status, educational level and ethnic origin).* Most of the CCs that do collect this kind of data indicate that there has been a very significant increase in the use of services. Estonia, for instance, has seen a threefold increase of the use of guidance by students since 2000; Latvia has seen a 25% increase in the use of the services by students, higher education students, and unemployed. Most CCs also note that guidance services tend to be most accessed by school-leavers and young adults; most of the clients are female, and from an urban background.

- *The different needs of different types of clients*. There are some examples of good practice in this area – Latvia, for instance, has regularly carried out different kinds of surveys that provide information regarding the different career guidance-related needs of schools students, VET students, and the unemployed. On the whole, however, there is a lack of such data from CCs. This could be related to the fact that most careers guidance services are undifferentiated, with the services following the 'one size fits all' approach. Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia stand out among the CCs for trying to tailor aspects of their careers guidance service to the specific needs of clients with disabilities.

- *Client satisfaction rates, and variation in these rates by client characteristics.* Where research on this aspect is carried out (e.g. Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania), the tendency is to focus on quantitative indicators (e.g. how many of the unemployed clients who used the career guidance service found a job or commenced further training). The collection of qualitative indicators (i.e. client satisfaction with the service offered) tends to be rare (e.g. Latvia).

5.2.3. It is significant to note that, as with several other countries involved in the parallel OECD survey, none of the CCs were in a position to provide sufficient details about the overall **cost of services**, the ways in which costs are shared between different parties, and the relative cost of different types of services.

5.3. Legislation and regulations

5.3.1. There is some variety in the extent to which legislation and regulation are used to **steer career guidance services** in the CCs reviewed. Some of the countries, such as Cyprus and Malta, have no legislation addressing vocational guidance, which is managed within the context of the civil service rules and regulations of the respective education and labour departments. Others, such as Estonia, Latvia and Poland, have detailed goals set out for career guidance within the context of national strategies concerning employment and human resource development, or of national development plans. Typically, where legislation does exist, reference to careers guidance is made within education Acts, or Laws concerning VET or those regulating the provision of services within the Ministry of Labour, where the right of citizens to vocational counselling is formally declared (e.g. Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia). Such references tend to be formulated in terms of general goals (such as 'enabling students to choose occupations', or 'facilitating

successful professional development of individuals', 'reducing unemployment and poverty', 'improving adaptability', and 'promoting entrepreneurship').

5.3.2. More rarely, one finds **legislative measures addressing vocational guidance specifically** (e.g. Lithuania), or a relatively detailed section focusing on guidance (e.g. Poland) in a law embracing a variety of aspects of public service. In such cases, one is more likely to find details regarding the type of services that are to be provided, how they are to be provided, the code of ethics that has to be followed in making provision, and the quality standards that have to be met. Some laws outline the new delivery structures that need to be set up in order to implement the provisions of the law. This is the case of Bulgaria and Slovakia. Occasionally, job descriptions for career guidance personnel have the force of formal regulations and orders, thus serving to establish standards (e.g. Romania).

5.3.3. Several of these laws and regulations have been promulgated in recent years, and most CCs reports note that while legal provisions have been made, these have often **not been implemented** (e.g. Latvia and Poland. Bulgaria has partially implemented its plans, but is still to establish the Career Information and Guidance Centres that the VET Law refers to). Legislation obviously does not guarantee access, but the fact that it is there normally provides a fillip to provision. It also justifies claims on the part of both providers and clients for adequate resources, and facilitates the development of programmes, as well as of structures for the delivery of such programmes.

5.4. Quality standards

5.4.1. Most CCs report an increased interest on the part of governments in introducing **quality assurance measures** in career guidance. In the case of Malta, for instance, this is part of an overall effort by the state to establish quality charters across all its departments, specifying not only standards, but also strategies to achieve those standards. In Romania, performance evaluation has been adopted as a mechanism for quality control, and is directly tied to career progression.

5.4.2. Practically all CCs have attempted to establish quality standards by **regulating entry into the profession** through the stipulation of minimal qualifications required by candidates. Most have also attempted to address quality issues by providing further training opportunities for staff, in some cases making this a condition for continued tenure of their post (e.g. Romania). Some countries have developed occupational descriptions for career guidance staff and for those involved in the production of career-related information, detailing the competencies that staff are expected to demonstrate (e.g. Malta, Poland, Slovakia). In most cases, these have the weight of guidelines, rather than being mandatory in nature, and are therefore less directive than standards, which often have checking procedures or sanctions attached to them. Some governments have also issued guidelines with a view to improving administrative procedures in guidance centres, or minimal criteria that have to be satisfied before public or private entities are awarded a licence to offer careers guidance services (e.g.

Bulgaria). The issue of central management of standards becomes critical in the context of a trend towards devolution of responsibilities to local government. As has already been noted, such a trend, when not sustained by determined policy steering, can have a potentially negative effect on ensuring quality standards across a country. In Poland, for instance, the standards developed by the National Labour Office in 1999 were never adopted after the PES was dismantled in favour of giving autonomy to the regional offices.

5.4.3. Overall, there are very few cases where **performance targets** have been articulated with a view to guaranteeing quality service, particularly from the point of view of the client. Only Slovenia notes a developing interest in outcomes-based evaluation of career guidance services.

5.4.4. Other than governments, **professional associations** can also spearhead initiatives that set out to ensure quality provision. Thus, the Latvian Association of Educational and Career Guidance Counsellors has made important steps forwards in drawing up standards applicable to career guidance. The National Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance in Romania has, for its part, developed a code of ethics as well as quality indicators for its members.

5.5. Improving stakeholder involvement

5.5.1. Strategic leadership can be improved through mechanisms that increase the involvement of stakeholders, particularly if these are represented on formal consultative and advisory bodies. Overall, it can be stated that for the CCs under review, **stakeholder involvement is underdeveloped**, partly because the public is not necessarily fully aware of the benefits of a well-functioning career guidance service, and partly because some policy-makers have not yet embraced styles of leadership that involve social partnership.

5.5.2. It has already been noted that **trade unions** are not particularly active in the field of career guidance in the CCs reviewed. **Employers**, however, tend to have a more direct involvement, both on a national and local level. Employers are of course involved in many career-guidance-related activities, ranging from addressing students in schools, hosting students for work shadowing or work experience and apprenticeship placements, and participating in careers exhibitions and fairs. Both trade unions and employers are involved more formally in national and local bodies through representation on constituted tripartite bodies that deal with different aspects of education, training and employment. In some cases, such as in Bulgaria and Slovakia, such representation is required by law.

5.5.3. Other stakeholders include **students and parents**. Their views are usually heard more often in the context of broad public consultations on needs, and the extent to which current services on offer meet those needs. In some of the CCs, such feedback is collected regularly and systematically, through client satisfaction surveys. In most cases, however, the views of these stakeholders are only gathered on an *ad hoc* and irregular basis, as a result of a specific project or

initiative. It is rare to find national bodies that involve parents and students as key partners in policy-making.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS – THE KEY ISSUES

6.1. This review has attempted to provide a cross-country analysis reflecting the most recent developments, trends, challenges and major issues for CCs regarding counselling and guidance, and the strengths and weaknesses of national guidance systems and policies. Readers will have got a sense of the variety in service provision, the repertoire of initiatives, the multiple strategies developed to overcome challenges, and the extensive efforts made to bolster the impact of career guidance in facilitating personal fulfillment, in improving access to lifelong learning, and in providing the appropriate human resources to build stronger, more dynamic economies. It is clear that, as is the case with the OECD country reviews to which this report should be considered a companion piece, none of the CCs, on its own, holds the key for addressing the most pressing issues that have been identified. Indeed, no such blueprint can possibly exist given that, despite an increasingly integrated and globalised world, each context has its own ecological specificity. Nevertheless, collectively, the eleven CC reports provide us with case studies of national career and information guidance systems, as well as with a rich thesaurus of good practice.

6.2. It is useful to outline the key challenges that lie ahead of the future member states in this area. Going by what the country experts have reported, the key issues as they appear in this synthesis document can be summarised under three related headings, i.e. in terms of (a) the extent, (b) the modality and (c) the resourcing of provision.

6.2.1. Key issues in terms of the extent of provision:

- The right to career guidance has only recently been entrenched in legal instruments in some of the candidate countries. Several of the latter do so only with reference to the vocational education and training sector.
- There does not yet seem to be much differentiated delivery of service which would permit a more effective response to the particular needs of particular groups, such as persons with disabilities, migrants, and refugees. It is significant that few of the reports mention career guidance programmes specifically aimed at women.
- There are significant gaps in guidance provision for adults. In particular, there have been few developments in making guidance services available for those already in employment, to support career changes, or to prepare them for increased leisure or retirement. Such services tend to be only offered, if at all, in large enterprises that have a strong HRD department.
- In most cases, but especially so in the labour market sector, there is a tendency to emphasise the giving of information rather than the provision of guidance.

6.2.2. Key issues In terms of the modality of provision:

- A major weakness in the area of career guidance is the lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, with the education and labour market providers often working in

parallel rather than in convergent and mutually beneficial ways. This is often to the detriment not only of clients, but of the staff themselves, who have much to learn from their respective experiences, knowledge and skills.

- Guidance in education contexts needs to move on from a mode of delivery that is almost solely focused at key decision-making points to one that is also infused in the curriculum through different subject areas. There is also plenty of scope for the further development of linkages between the world of education and that of employment, particularly when such activities encourage young people to engage in a critically informed manner with issues that will soon be central to their lives.
- While there is a trend towards encouraging clients to engage in a self-service mode in relation to educational and career guidance, the overwhelming approach to the field is still traditional, inspired by input models of provision.
- Despite inadequate staff to client ratios, much of the guidance activities are still aimed at the individual, when group approaches would ensure greater access to the service.
- Few initiatives were reported by candidate country experts in terms of the development of community-based provision of careers guidance services, in such a way as to attend to the needs of the hard to reach.
- Quality assurance mechanisms are underdeveloped in most candidate countries, as is the evidence base. There is little research that can guide providers in terms of the effectiveness of the service they offer in reaching different types of clients and in responding to their needs. This is especially important as the reports on which this synthesis is based indicated that there is an increasing tendency for the state to outsource and contract out provision.
- Social partnership in the provision of career guidance services is underdeveloped in the candidate countries. Parents, alumni, employers, and occasionally trade unions do contribute information, experiences and advice, but only on a sporadic basis.
- There is an increasingly widespread use of ICTs in the dissemination of educational and occupational information. However a lot of the media used do not support a guidance function, and may often be a computer-based version of what is already available in print. More must be done to exploit the connectivity functions that information and communication technology permits, enabling clients to clarify aspirations, to evaluate skills, and to identify further education, training and employment opportunities.

6.2.3. Key issues In terms of resourcing provision:

- More effort must be made to provide guidance staff with pre-service specialised training, possibly as a certificate or diploma-level course after a first degree in such related areas as psychology, economics, and/or the humanities.
- In both the education and labour market sectors, it is clear that career guidance staff often suffer from a role overload that severely limits their effectiveness.
- Careers guidance staff tend to be under-professionalised, in the sense that in candidate countries they are generally not benefitting from the kinds of activities that associations undertake to advance their own profession, include training, research, the development of codes of practice, and so on. The competencies expected of careers guidance personnel are often not clearly stipulated.

- Much of the funding for guidance activities comes from the state, with little input from the private sector. There is little research that can guide the public and/or private sector in channelling resources to particular sectors or groups.

6.3. Needless to say, each country will gauge the extent to which it has already taken on the challenges identified above. The list merely serves as a useful overview of what the candidate country experts have collectively singled out as needing the attention. Policy-makers and practitioners can, in this way, better situate their own activities within the general picture, appraising and benchmarking their own achievements in relation to those of others, and drawing inspiration from the range of alternatives that have been piloted elsewhere.

Annex

Estonia's Information, Guidance and Counselling Services: A Brief Overview of National Arrangements

Estonia – Background: area: 45 227 km²; population: 1 361 000 (30 per km²; 17,2 % aged <15); Labour Force 705 100 (367 500 men, 337 700 women), Share of Industry: 33%; Services: 60,1%; Agriculture: 6,9%. Unemployment rate: 5,4% (share of unemployment for <25: 22,2%). GDP per capita: € 6171; Religion: there is no state church, the largest church is Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the next in size is Apostolic-Orthodox Church; only 16% of the population have formalised their ties to a specific congregation; Life expectancy at birth: 64,7 (men), 76,2 (women).

(Source: Statistical Office of Estonia, Data for 2001 & 2002)

Education facts and indicators of 2001/02 academic year: 80% of the 5-year olds attend pre-school education; in 132 primary schools and 282 basic schools 179222 students and in 240 secondary schools 39425 students; most of the general education institutions are in municipal ownership, there is only 32 private general education institutions and 32 state general education institutions (of which 19 are the schools for students with special needs); in 46 schools for students with special needs 5850 students; in 80 vet schools 29813 students; in 33 higher education institutions 52786 students; less than 1,5 – 2% go to private sector, the majority goes to municipal schools; 97,5% continued studies after basic education (compulsory education, grades 1 – 9), 72,1% went to general secondary education, 25,4 to vocational secondary education; 89,2% continue studies after general secondary education (gymnasium grades 10. – 12), 21,5% went to vet schools, 67,7% to higher education; 8% of vet school graduates continued studies at the higher education level; literacy rate for whole population: 99,8%.

(Source: Estonian National Observatory)

General Background

Careers guidance has been practised in Estonia for over 70 years. Similarly to the rest of the world, the development and nature of this field has been dependent on the interaction of several factors.

Today in Estonia, the co-ordination of careers guidance and counselling is divided between two ministries: the **Ministry of Education** is responsible for the provision of services to **young people** whereas the main target group of the **Ministry of Social Affairs** are the **unemployed**. The number and range of services provided by the **private sector** is growing rapidly. Companies provide mainly recruitment services, careers counselling (both on outplacement and career development purposes) for companies, coaching and competency assessment, career development services for managerial staff or specialists

Careers guidance is closely related to psychology, thus one of the most vital influence factors is the level and the development prospects of the psychological sciences in the

country. Studies in the field of psychology as well as teaching psychology at institutions of higher education ensure availability of specialists with required qualifications, and set the paradigm on the basis of which the people engaged in career counselling organise their work. The core nature of counselling has shifted: co-operation and communication between the client and the counsellor have come to replace formerly dominant testing and information provision.

There are several examples of new **legislation and regulations** in both sectors. For the political steering of services there are no mandatory standards existing within the educational sector. Within the labour market sector, the public services' standards have been officially approved and the instructions for providing vocational guidance services, official form for reporting on vocational guidance and job description for service provider (including activities by target groups) have been established.
In 2003, one cannot yet speak about a unified and sufficiently regulated vocational guidance and counselling system in Estonia. The respective need has been officially recognised though, and steps are being made to find optimum solutions.

Guidance in the Educational Sector
On the Ministry level, information about careers guidance and counselling activities for youth in different parts of Estonia is assembled, and decisions about future actions and resources are taken. To carry out these tasks, the Ministry works in close co-operation with two organisations – the Estonian Youth Work Centre and the Foundation VET Reform in Estonia. Relevant annual agreements are signed with the county governors (15) who are responsible for the services in the area. **Youth information and counselling centres** (YICC) in each county provide the careers guidance and counselling services. However, it has to be noted that in the Estonian context, careers guidance and counselling forms only an undefined part in the work of YICC and counsellors working there, hence differing by region in scope and capacity. Currently, there are 21 centres in operation across Estonia, including centres that operate in the biggest cities of Estonia and are related to the local governments.

In addition, careers related information is also provided at **general education** schools by being integrated as a cross-curricula theme "Professional Career and its Development" into the *National Curriculum for Basic Schools and Gymnasia.* Although the implementation of this cross-curricula theme has been officially postponed till 1.09.2004, school managements are gradually starting the preparation process by identifying staff members responsible for the field.

Service provision in schools is further supported by **school psychologists** who in many cases also provide careers counselling services. Today they use mostly personality-centred humanistic counselling methods that help young people to determine their current situation: their aptitudes, personal characteristics and vocational orientations. Assistance is likewise offered to students in discovering their development potential and inner resources. Usually counsellors are attached to the central unit, but have no formal teaching duties.

In **vocational education establishments**, the provision of careers services has been practically non-existent till school year 2002/3. The last couple of years have seen a major reform in the network of vocational schools whereby in some towns several schools have been merged into one regional training centre (RTC), which also provides training courses for adults. Some of these new RTC-s have introduced the provision of career services to a certain extent – either in the form of specific lessons (eg job seeking skills etc) or through testing and feedback, provided by career counsellors visiting the school. In general, however, it can be said that career issues and respective support has been very limited within the vocational education establishments.

At tertiary level, careers services operate in 5 Estonian universities. In addition to career consultation and counselling, they often act as a bridge between employers and students, by organising relevant lectures and seminars, company presentations, by providing job mediation and practice, and giving the opportunity to join the job-seekers database. I respect to the university's quality assurance system the career centre's utmost important activity is the collection of feedback from the labour market (first destination survey, employer questionnaires). Services in higher education institutions are established on universities' initiative; there is no central regulation.

Guidance in the Labour Market Sector

Under the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Labour Market Services Act came into force on October 1, 2000 deeming vocational guidance to be a labour market service as stipulated by the law. There are 18 vocational counsellors working currently in 16 regional employment offices.

The central Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for establishing the political guidelines and strategic goals that make up the national labour market policy, and for seeing to it that these guidelines are adhered to. The implementation of the labour market policy is monitored by the administrative Labour Market Board, which supervises and monitors the regional employment offices (16).

Today vocational guidance in employment offices is offered only to unemployed job seekers (i.e. registered as unemployed) and to job-seekers, who have received notice of contract termination due to re-organisation within the enterprise. At the same time, information about the situation on the labour market and about the possibilities of labour market training is provided to every information seeker.

All 16 regional employment offices offer vocational counselling services with a total number of 18 counsellors working in the system. In 2002, counselling was provided to more than 8100 job seekers which forms ~ 7,5% of the total amount of the unemployed. The main target group comprises above all long-term unemployed; women (men) returning to the labour market after an extended period of absence due to either raising the family or other reasons; job seekers who do not have any qualifications, previous work experience or who cannot work in their field because of health reasons; people belonging to minorities; and employers looking for appropriate labour force. The aim of vocational counselling is to help job seekers to acquire better understanding of their work

situation, the education and labour market conditions and to find solutions to their choices concerning employment and training. The service is voluntary and free of charge for the client. The recommendations of the counsellor are taken into consideration when suggesting applicable labour market services to the client. On the basis of the job seeker's needs, the following methods are applied during the counselling session: informing about the labour market situation and labour market training possibilities, interviewing in order to identify the client's wishes, professional suitability testing, counselling on how to make appropriate choices about employment, training and job seeking. Starting from 2003, individual activity plans will be elaborated for job seekers belonging to risk groups (young people aged 16 – 24, long-term unemployed, mothers with small children) in order to re-integrate them into the labour market, and for the unemployment assurance benefit applicants in order to activate their job seeking process.

In addition to individual counselling, group information and counselling methods are likewise applied to groups with similar needs. In many offices, job seekers have access to Internet, in the server computer they can prepare documents to apply for a job. The development of an Internet-based self-information system was started in 2003 in order to improve accessibility to labour market services. Besides work and training mediation, the self-information system will likewise provide career information, professional suitability testing and e-learning possibilities.

All counsellors working in the employment offices have higher education (80% in psychology, pedagogy or social work). Regular further training sessions are being organised on the basis of the training programme approved by the Estonian Labour Market Board to raise the professional skills of the vocational counsellors.

Strengths:

- General acknowledgement within the Ministries of the importance and necessity of guidance services.
- A set of newly elaborated documents and laws regulating the service provision in the labour market system – e.g. aim, tasks and clients of the service, quality service criteria and service delivery standards.
- The higher education requirement and co-ordinated further training of counsellors has resulted in a harmonised level of professional skills of the counsellors working in the labour market system.
- The existence of some methodological materials and tools – handbooks for counsellors, workbooks for job seekers and pupils, professional suitability tests.
- Growing co-operation on the regional level between the two guidance sectors (education and labour market), including the exchange of information, the dissemination of information materials, and the organisation of joint information days.

Weaknesses:

- The lack of unified political steering of the field without a clear division of tasks and collaboration between the two Ministries (Education and Science, and Social Affairs)

- Two separate counselling systems – separate management, financing, different target groups. This impedes purposeful co-operation, does not allow many development activities to be carried out jointly, is more resource-consuming.
- Guidance is insufficiently regulated in relevant policy documents within the educational sector, service delivery standards and quality assurance criteria have not been developed yet.
- The higher level training of vocational and career counsellors, and a respective curriculum are missing.
- Low wages in the sector, which results in difficulties to find and keep specialists with high qualifications.
- The accessibility and quality of vocational counselling services is regionally uneven.
- Guidance of working adults is addressed only by the private sector.

The Way Forward:

- The joint development of a guidance service provision model to become the basis of national implementation strategy which addresses young people and adults (both working and unemployed).
- New developments supporting the teaching of careers issues as a cross-curricular theme within the National Curriculum for Basic Schools and Gymnasia.
- The development of high-quality Internet-based information systems and other electronic tools for different target groups.
- The acknowledgement of the guidance practitioner as an elementary participant in the implementation of lifelong learning.
- Co-operation with EU Member States and EEA countries.
- The development of new methods to address the needs of different target groups (adults, pupils, risk groups etc).

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