

CAREER GUIDANCE

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN SERBIA



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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the European Training Foundation (ETF) 2010 work programme regarding Serbia, the ETF organised a field visit to Belgrade between 24 and 26 March 2010. Its twofold purpose was to assess progress in the career guidance area between 2004 and 2010 and to analyse trends and future prospects for career guidance development – possibly supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) or other donor programmes – in the light of the European dimension and the new European Union (EU) lifelong guidance paradigm. During the visit, the ETF leading expert in career guidance, Helmut Zelloth, met with policymakers and senior officials in the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Education and the National Employment Service, visited a Career Information and Professional Counselling Service, a university career development centre at Belgrade University and Belgrade Open School and met with local career guidance experts.

This paper is mainly based on observations and conclusions from the field visit and on other documentation made available by national authorities and local experts. It also draws on information from previous ETF documents, such as Klenha (2008) and Dimov and Gligorijevic (2004) prepared in the framework of the ETF policy review of career guidance in the Western Balkan region. In addition, the report draws on Secibovic (2005) and the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2010) adopted in March and translated into English in June 2010.

The findings from the field visit, the analysis of major career guidance developments and the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and policy observations and recommendations were all shared with national authorities during a national career guidance workshop held in Belgrade on 24 September 2010. In the period from 7 to 25 October 2010 the draft report underwent an official consultation process with Serbian ministries and agencies involved in career guidance and with other stakeholders and career guidance providers in Serbia. The present report takes into account the comments made during this consultation process.

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2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Compared to most of its neighbours in the Western Balkans, Serbia has a good basic career guidance system that has made progress in recent years¹. The recent revival of career guidance in the national policy agenda is largely a home-grown development but is also to some extent linked to the European dimension and wider trends in career guidance at the EU and international levels. Two Council of the European Union resolutions on career guidance, namely Council Resolution on Guidance Throughout Life (2004) and Council Resolution on Better Integrating Lifelong Guidance into Lifelong Learning Strategies (2008), will most likely further impact on career guidance practice and system development, since Serbia, as a potential candidate country, is moving closer to a European integration perspective.

Serbia, nonetheless, faces many challenges in career guidance development that need to be addressed in the short- and medium-term:

1. To successfully implement the ambitious policy goals established by the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan. This cannot be done using national resources only but will require external funding, e.g. through the EU pre-accession support programmes or/and in the form of donor support.
2. To optimise career guidance leadership, cooperation and coordination mechanisms by establishing a national career guidance policy forum and/or national and local networks of guidance providers and initiatives.
3. To build stronger career guidance services in the education sector. This will require undertaking a feasibility study on different career guidance options in the education sector, with particular emphasis on possible curricular models of guidance and capacity building for practitioners and ministry officials.
4. To continue moving the career guidance system towards the new lifelong guidance paradigm. This means broadening access to lifelong career guidance through a range of providers (including the newly established youth offices in municipalities), particularly for groups which are not yet sufficiently covered by services, emphasising career management skills in education and training and changing delivery methods from psychological 'testing' to 'tasting' the world of work.
5. To accelerate EU integration and cooperation in career guidance, by taking into account and adopting the priorities of the 2004 and 2008 Council resolutions on career guidance, by participating in the activities of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and by establishing a national resource centre linked to the Euroguidance network.
6. To introduce a comprehensive and national career information system (both print-based and web-based) that serves different target groups with a lifelong guidance perspective.
7. To improve the quality and effectiveness of career guidance services by: developing a common competences framework for career guidance practitioners in the education and employment sectors; piloting post-graduate career guidance studies and enhanced/systematic training provision; developing a monitoring and evaluation system for career guidance activities; fostering demand-oriented research and surveys; developing better synergies between providers; and enhancing parental involvement.

A number of demand factors and barriers related to further career guidance development have been identified in Serbia and it is argued that the drivers for demand outweigh the factors that speak against investment in career guidance. One driver of demand is Serbia's gradual accession in relation to the EU employment, education and social inclusion agenda. Although direct empirical evidence and demand data in Serbia are limited, it seems that, overall, there is a huge need for support for growing numbers of young people that will enable them to make more informed choices on future learning and working pathways. This has been confirmed not only by many interlocutors interviewed during the field visit in Belgrade but is also supported by the evidence of various demand pull and push factors for career guidance that apply to the Serbian context.

¹ The report relies on the international definition of career guidance as covering services (career information, counselling and guidance) intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make education, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. This definition is used also in EU policy documents and marks a paradigm shift in the career guidance research and policy-making community. It comprises both educational and vocational guidance as well as orientation, traditional terms used by a number of countries.

3. CAREER GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

The comparison benchmark for measuring progress in the period 2004–10 is the comprehensive ETF review on career guidance in Serbia (Dimov and Gligorijevic, 2004)². Examining the state of play in career guidance some seven years later, a number of areas can be identified where major progress has been made.

A comprehensive career guidance policy framework, titled National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy for the Republic of Serbia, was developed during 2008–09 under the coordination of the Ministry of Youth and Sport and was finally adopted by the government in March 2010, along with a detailed Action Plan covering the period 2010–14. This development not only constitutes a major milestone in the history of career guidance in Serbia but also represents a great opportunity for systemic development of career guidance in the future. Moreover, career guidance policies are not isolated initiatives but have been well connected and articulated within wider government strategies, such as youth, education and employment policies and related legislation. In the area of vocational education and training (VET), a precursor to the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan was the model for career guidance and counselling for VET developed in 2005 and later piloted.

A new Law on the Basic Principles of the System of Education and Upbringing was adopted in 2009, paving the way to making career guidance support for students compulsory in schools. It stipulates that pupils and students need to be assisted in making proper decisions on further education, careers, self-development and future life. This properly addresses the biggest gap in the Serbian career guidance system, namely, the lack of services for students in primary and secondary educational institutions. This law also prescribes that VET career guidance falls within the competence of the Serbian Council for Vocational and Adult Education.

New key actors in career guidance development have appeared on the career guidance scene from both the governmental and non-governmental organisation (NGO) sectors, most notably the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Belgrade Open School, both of which are major drivers of the agenda in this area. The Ministry of Youth and Sport was established only as recently as 2007. Since a career guidance strategy was one of the goals set in the Ministry of Youth and Sport's National Youth Strategy, this ministry started the coordination process for development of the strategy by gathering together all the key actors: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of the Economy and Regional Development, the National Employment Service and Belgrade Open School. As a joint effort, the Ministry of Youth and Sport successfully coordinated the development of the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy, which includes all citizens and not just young people.

The institutional career guidance provision infrastructure has been widened through the creation of new types of centres. These guidance-specific centres mainly serve special target groups like the unemployed, higher education students or talented youth. The first of these centres – the Centre for Career Development – was founded by the University of Belgrade in 2006 to provide student counselling services and career development support at university level. Starting from 2007, Career Information and Counselling Centres were established in two local public employment offices (Belgrade and Nis) and, following the University of Belgrade example, career development centres were established and became operational in three other universities (Universities of Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Nis)³. There are plans to further expand the network of Career Information and Counselling Centres and university career centres to Novi Sad, Novi Pazar and Pristina (in the Kosovska Mitrovica region). More recently, a Centre for Career Guidance and Counselling for Young Talents was successfully piloted in the Ministry of Youth and Sport by the Belgrade Open School and is likely to be continued in 2011. In addition, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has supported local governments since 2007 in setting up a structure of more than 100 youth offices throughout the country; it is intended to expand these further and to also include a career guidance function.

² The National Employment Service traditionally has led career guidance development in Serbia for many years and still has the largest stock of career guidance professionals in the country.

³ It needs to be stressed that the capacities of University Career Centres are still very limited. For instance, the Career Centre at the University of Novi Sad has only one staff member to serve a total population of 45,000 students.

Along with the creation of the new institutional infrastructure, there has been some innovation in career guidance provision and methods. Access to career guidance services has been improved to some extent for the unemployed and for new target groups, such as higher education students, talented youth or VET students, but is still far from meeting the overall demand from young people and adults in Serbia. In the methodological area, the National Employment Service has led a number of developments, with a new professional interest test and a self-assessment e-questionnaire. The first interactive career guidance website in Serbia was introduced by the National Employment Service in 2004 and, since then, a number of NGOs and commercial enterprises started to offer services online (e.g. www.infostud.com, www.careerdays.org.rs, www.jobfair.rs and www.studentinapraksi.com). The first comprehensive web portal (Mingl Career Profile, www.karijera.mingl.org) to help young people manage their career choices was introduced by Belgrade Open School in 2010. This site offers online tests, allows users to create a personal career plan profile and provides job descriptions of occupations and a database of all higher education institutions. Since 2005, career orientation fairs have been organised regularly by the National Employment Service, targeting educational institutions, students, parents and other information providers. In the same year, a new edition of the Guide for Professional Choices after Primary Schools was produced in Serbia.

Some training activities for career guidance staff were implemented – usually as part of wider projects supported by donors – mainly for counsellors in the public employment services. Recently, a small-scale training initiative was launched for secondary school teachers, staff and management to familiarise these with the concept of career guidance⁴.

There has been some progress in career guidance policy coordination due to the coordination role assigned to the new Ministry of Youth and Sport with regard to preparing the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan. This experience is a good basis for future policy coordination and has enhanced awareness of the need for a more permanent policy coordination mechanism in career guidance.

Overall progress in career guidance in recent years can be characterised as a largely home-grown and bottom-up development process. This has led to increased awareness and ownership among the major stakeholders and policymakers involved in career guidance. Serbia also managed to attract donor support from various international and bilateral agencies, which have played an important role in its progress to date (EU, United States Agency for International Development, Canadian International Development Agency, German Organisation for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Austrian Development Agency and Open Society Fund). **TABLE 3.1** provides a more detailed overview of the major milestones in career guidance development and initiatives in Serbia in the last seven years.

⁴ This training, conducted by Belgrade Open School in 2010, included 15 secondary schools and 60 tourism and catering trainees, who afterwards trained or provided services to over 4,000 students. An earlier career guidance training initiative by Belgrade Open School (2005–07) covered 30 other school employees.

TABLE 3.1 MILESTONES IN CAREER GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA⁵, 2004–10

| Year | Intervention type | Description | Major outcomes and impact | Resource |
|--------------|--|---|--|--|
| 2004 | National Report on Career Guidance | A comprehensive review of the policy context and career guidance system including a SWOT analysis | Policy recommendations which stimulated further career guidance development in Serbia | ETF National Observatory of Serbia |
| 2005 | A Model of Career Guidance and Counselling for VET in Serbia | A sub-project in the framework of the VET Reform Programme managed by the European Agency for Reconstruction | Model implemented on a pilot basis in four VET schools as a precursor to the VET Career Guidance Centres network | EU Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) VET Reform Programme Belgrade Open School |
| 2005–07 | Policy Orientations on Lifelong Career Guidance in Education and Employment | Training of career counsellors and mediators based in public employment services | More than 800 counsellors and mediators were trained to apply a new model of working with the unemployed | EU CARDS Programme 2004–07 |
| 2005 2008 | Networking with Schools in Austria Career Guidance Programme Development | Twinning and study visits, school staff training (teachers, pedagogues and psychologists) and development of tools (Valjevo Regional School Directorate) | Career guidance implemented in six primary schools, one gymnasium and six VET schools Staff trained and operational Guide for vocational guidance prepared | Austrian Development Agency KulturKontakt |
| 2005 | Guide to Choosing the Right Career | Guide with crucial information for decision making regarding secondary education and occupations | 30,000 copies printed | National Employment Service |
| | Where To Go After Primary School? | Occupation descriptions and self-assessment questionnaire | | |
| 2005 | Career Guidance and Education Fairs | Development of the direct model of group information on education and employment possibilities and perspectives for final year primary and secondary students | About 20 fairs per year (increasing trend) | National Employment Service Ministry of Education |
| 2006 | Self-efficiency Training | Workshops for long-term and vulnerable groups of unemployed Motivation and psychological support for active job searching and development of personal responsibility for career planning | Employability level raised | National Employment Service |

5 Includes donor-funded projects.

| Year | Intervention type | Description | Major outcomes and impact | Resource |
|---------|--|---|--|--|
| 2006 | Career Information and Professional Counselling Centres | Development of the model for Career Information and Professional Counselling Centres Plan for implementation in 10 branch offices | Unemployed and students provided with information on labour market needs and career guidance and counselling Model fully implemented in two branch offices (Nis Belgrade) and another two in progress (Novi Sad and Kragujevac) | National Employment Service |
| 2006 | Implementation of a Career Guidance and Counselling Model in the VET System in Serbia | Training of VET teachers for implementation of career guidance in their teaching activities | Also created was the initial text proposition for the career guidance strategy | Canadian International Development Agency Belgrade Open School |
| 2006 | Establishment of the First University Centre for Career Development at the University of Belgrade | Training the initial team and establishing the first career centre at university level in Serbia aimed at enabling students and graduates to realise their potential and understand the options available in order to implement career decisions Launch of a website and student and employer services | Professional services introduced which support students and graduates on career issues, connect them to the business community, and promote the importance of such student services Stimulated set-up of further career centres in other universities | University of Belgrade University of Nottingham, UK (initial support) |
| 2007 | Know-how Training for Establishing University Career Centres | After initial training at Nottingham University Career Centre, teams from the career centres of the universities of Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Nis attended additional training at the University of Belgrade Career Development Centre | Experience of operating pilot service for a year shared and standards for working procedures with both students and employers set to assist operation of new centres | University of Belgrade |
| 2007–08 | Establishment of Three More University Centres for Career Development (Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Nis) | Establishment of university career development centres at the universities of Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Nis | Professional services introduced to support students and recent graduates on career issues | Universities of Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Nis |
| 2008 | Preparation of a Serbian Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy (and First Public Discussions) | The first project that brought together all experts in career guidance to develop a strategic document (Belgrade Open School, Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Economy and Regional Development, Ministry of Labour, National Employment Service, Serbian Association of Employers and Serbian Chamber of Commerce) | Team of experts in career guidance and counselling established Overall career guidance strategy developed Public presentations and discussions held (including in 16 secondary education schools and in ministries) | Canadian International Development Agency Belgrade Open School |

| Year | Intervention type | Description | Major outcomes and impact | Resource |
|---------|---|---|---|--|
| 2008 | National Youth Strategy | The first strategy of this kind in Serbia; it makes important references to career guidance and occupational counselling and providing access to young people of all regions to stimulate all forms of employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship | Plans to establish career guidance and occupational counselling centres within education and introduce career information into educational and extracurricular activities | Ministry of Youth and Sport |
| 2008–10 | Local Youth Offices | Establishment of more than 100 local multifunctional youth offices with a career guidance function | 110 local youth offices established so far, but not yet enabled to offer career guidance | Local governments Ministry of Youth and Sport (support) |
| 2009 | Law on the Basic Principles of the System of Education and Upbringing | Brings education back on the reform path and widely opens the education system to career guidance activities | Article 4, objective 8 stipulates 'enabling (pupils and students) to make decision on further education and occupation and their own development and future life' | Ministry of Education |
| 2009 | Establishment of Career Guidance and Non-Formal Education Promotion Centres in Technical VET Schools | Establishment of career guidance and non-formal education promotion centre in the Kragujevac Technical School Career guidance training for teachers from two VET schools Modular-based training for students from two VET schools 'Entrepreneurship Camp' for students | Career guidance centre established in technical schools 20 teachers trained in career guidance (certified as career guidance mentors) 160 students from two VET schools as clients | School for Peace NGO Ministry of Youth and Sport |
| 2009–10 | Improvement of Youth Employability Through Promotion of Non-Formal Education in Career Guidance Centres in Technical VET Schools | Improving employability of students attending last year of VET and preparing them to cope with labour market demands | 400 technical school students received guidance and counselling and attended training modules (non-formal education, career planning, active job search) Job shadowing implemented and cooperation with major Kragujevac employers established | School for Peace NGO Open Society Fund |
| 2009–10 | Centre for Career Guidance for Young Talents | Development of the Career Guidance and Counselling Centre for Talented Youth model and establishment of the first centre | Support in career information, planning and counselling for young talents, liaison with employers and matrix standards implemented Website under construction | Ministry of Youth and Sport Belgrade Open School |

| Year | Intervention type | Description | Major outcomes and impact | Resource |
|---------|---|---|--|--|
| 2009-10 | Mingl Career Profile | <p>Launch of Mingl Career Profile web portal to help young people manage career choices more easily and according to career guidance and counselling psychological standards</p> <p>Online tests, recommendations of specific occupations, database of job descriptions, creation of personal career plan-profile</p> | The second Serbian online system for career guidance of young people (the first was the National Employment Service in 2005) | <p>US Embassy</p> <p>Belgrade Open School</p> <p>Ministry of Youth and Sport</p> |
| 2010 | Training in Secondary Career Guidance and Counselling | Training in secondary career guidance for 15 VET tourism and catering and 60 education workers (principals, teachers and psychologists) | <p>Awareness raising among secondary school employees regarding career guidance and counselling</p> <p>Approval and official recommendation from the Ministry of Education for schools to participate</p> | <p>United States Agency for International Development</p> <p>Belgrade Open School</p> |
| 2010 | Inclusive Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling in the VET System in Serbia | Development of a first version of the VET Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy | Public discussion on the first version of the strategy | <p>Canadian International Development Agency</p> <p>Belgrade Open School</p> |
| 2010 | Serbian Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan 2010-14 | The first strategy document for career guidance in Serbia at government level, after almost three years of negotiations and constant promotion of the importance of career guidance for the Serbian economy and education | <p>Will be a major driver for systemic career guidance development in Serbia in the future</p> <p>Major objectives: to establish and promote a career guidance and counselling system and to develop the system in education and employment</p> | <p>Ministry of Youth and Sport, in cooperation with experts from the Ministry of the Economy and Regional Development, National Employment Service, Ministry of Education and Belgrade Open School</p> |
| 2010 | European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network | As a potential EU candidate country, Serbia was invited to participate as an observer in the activities of this network of career guidance policymakers from EU member states and other countries | <p>Gradual EU integration in career guidance through participation in meetings, exchanges of experience and policy learning can be expected in the forthcoming years</p> <p>Up to four Serbian representatives to be nominated for a national delegation (from education, employment, youth and the NGO sectors)</p> | <p>ETF</p> <p>European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network</p> <p>EU member states European Commission (DG Education and Culture)</p> <p>Ministry of Youth and Sport</p> <p>Others to be determined</p> |

4. KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Despite the progress achieved in the period 2005–10, in particular in policy development and to some extent in career guidance practice, Serbia still faces many challenges and has structural weaknesses in career guidance development that need to be addressed in the short- and medium-term. Many of those have been recognised by the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy as needing further consideration and elaboration. Below we point to the major challenges, taking into account aspects that have been less explicitly considered by the national strategic framework.

There are serious implementation challenges related to the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy, despite the impressive and well elaborated Action Plan adopted as part of the strategy. Since both documents contain very ambitious goals, they are posing budgetary and organisational challenges.

The National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy estimates a total funding requirement of RSD 91 million for the period 2010–14, further broken down in the Action Plan. A substantial RSD 40 million is planned to be ensured through the state budget provisions for the three Ministries of Youth and Sport, Education and the Economy and Regional Development). The remaining RSD 51 million is supposed to be acquired through a mix of other national funds, private donations and international/bilateral donors and also a career guidance development fund to be contributed to by local governments, although it is not clear if this fund has yet been established. While a multi-institutional funding approach can positively result in overall higher allocations, the fact remains that this ambitious strategy depends greatly on the necessary funds being raised. It will be a challenge to ensure this funding mix as the sources are quite diversified; furthermore not all of them are yet known and there may be competition with the funding needs of other education and employment policy and priority areas in Serbia. In addition, estimates are missing regarding additional numbers of career guidance staff and the funds needed to ensure running and staff costs as well as overall sustainability of the career guidance system after 2014.

The main goal of the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy is to establish and develop the career guidance and counselling system (in education and employment and also lifelong) and the Action Plan defines an ambitious 26 major activities to achieve this goal. It also defines expected results and indicators and the providers and participants in each of the activities. The organisational challenges lie in the holistic approach of targeting the entire career guidance system and in ensuring a logical sequencing of, and effective linkages and integration between, individual activities. For instance, the establishment of a national resource centre (to be responsible for coordinating system development) is planned only for the end of the Action Plan period (2014), even though it might be more effective in supporting system development if it were established at an earlier stage or gradually over the period 2011–14.

RECOMMENDATION 1

- To ensure that implementation of the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan – or at least substantial elements thereof – becomes part of and is financed by forthcoming EU pre-accession support programmes (2011 onwards) for both the education and employment sectors and/or by other large-scale bilateral or international donor programmes. This may meet a substantial proportion of the funding needed to match the state budgetary allocation for career guidance for the short- to mid-term period (2011–14). For the mid- to long-term perspective, as soon as Serbia becomes eligible, use could be made of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and later on of EU Structural Funds, both of which are an important additional source of financing for career guidance for a number of member states.

Taking into account the above challenges regarding successful and full implementation of the ambitious policy goals established by the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan, from the outset a strong commitment from, and sound coordination between all stakeholders will be required, in particular from the three key ministries involved. The Action Plan therefore rightly places the activity referring to the creation of cooperation protocols for key actors in developing the career guidance and counselling system at the forefront of the implementation process in 2010–11.

However, required as a top priority, in addition to these cooperation protocols, which are supposed to regulate the roles and responsibilities of all the partners involved, is a stable and well functioning national policy and programme coordination mechanism. The past shows that there is great scope for improving and optimising career guidance leadership, cooperation and coordination mechanisms in Serbia, with a wide range of options to choose from. For instance, the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy assigns system development responsibility and coordination to the future national resource centre, despite the fact that such centres in other countries play a more

methodological role. Another option is to create a career guidance policy forum, similar to the different types of national lifelong guidance policy forums that have emerged in a number of EU member states in recent years (see Cedefop, 2008). Other options include setting up specific councils and committees or their integration into existing structures (e.g. education and employment councils) if they have a cross-sector mandate for the entire career guidance system.

In addition to policy issues, thought might be given to fostering a national and local network of career guidance providers and initiatives, including donors. Experience from EU neighbouring countries shows that existing guidance services and initiatives are not well connected and sometimes not even known to each other and that communication between them is often lacking. Some kind of network or forum could provide a platform for improving cooperation and networking at the national and local levels through regular dialogue, exchange of information and cooperation on a range of aspects (materials, service delivery, etc). Such an alliance could also help to attract and sustain donor-supported innovations in career guidance once projects expire. Moreover, if well organised and resourced, they could also fulfil an advisory function for policymakers.

RECOMMENDATION 2

- To treat policy coordination in career guidance as a top priority and to establish, from the outset of implementation of the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy, a sound and well-functioning policy coordination mechanism (i.e. a national policy forum, council or committee).
- To explore whether the creation of a network of providers and initiatives at the national and local levels would add value to career guidance policy making and system development.

The chronic traditional weakness and lack of career guidance services in the education sector will demand a great deal of policy attention as well as substantial resources in the future, in order to achieve a significant increase in access, in particular for the large numbers of primary and secondary school students standing at their first educational choice threshold with a bearing on future occupational choices. The decade to 2009 can be considered a lost decade for career guidance in the education sector, since there was no Ministry of Education policy interest in career guidance during this period and the only ministry staff member who had an official career guidance function was not replaced on retirement some ten years ago. A regulation from the early 1990s assigning an official career guidance function to school psychologists and pedagogues is not widely known in Serbian schools and, in practice, career guidance is often left to the individual initiative and enthusiasm of psychologists.

New legislation from 2009 obliges schools to introduce career guidance to support students but the capacities of schools to do this still remain to be built. However, a number of important strategic choices have to be made well in advance of large-scale and system-wide capacity building. For example:

- Which delivery model would best fit the education sector in Serbia? The curriculum or centre model and, within these models, a specialist or semi-specialist approach or a combination of both?
- Who would be the most appropriate delivery agents in schools? Psychologists, pedagogues, social workers, educational counsellors, career guidance specialists, teachers of certain subjects or VET teachers only, subject teachers, expert associates, external providers, etc? What will be the competence and selection criteria for choosing the most appropriate staff?
- What is the expected role of the delivery agents? Should they be full-time or part-time, and, if part-time, should their role be a very minor one (as happens currently with psychologists in schools) or an extended or even major role?

Even within the curriculum model different choices exist, such as introducing a compulsory or elective career education subject, making career guidance a compulsory part of other subjects, opting for a compulsory integrated curriculum principle for all subjects or having guidance as part of curricular or extra-curricular activities. Models can be also combined, e.g. schools can decide whether they prefer a separate subject or an integrated curriculum principle.

The choices made have implications not only for the nature and scale of capacity building for key career guidance delivery agents but also for the cost and affordability of the career guidance system overall.

The current picture of the Serbian career guidance system shows that the centre model is dominant. Recent developments as outlined in Chapter 3 (new types of centres established in last years) and indications from the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan (regarding the national resource centre and centres in schools) suggest that the centre model will drive future guidance services to be established in the education system. However, opting for other models or combining different models could result in more cost-effective and efficient career guidance provision.

TABLE 4.1 TAXONOMY MATRIX OF CAREER GUIDANCE INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS IN SERBIA, 2010

| Modality | Career information | Career management | Work tasting | Testing | Individual guidance | Group guidance | Career counselling |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Curriculum model | | | | | | | |
| Compulsory career education subject | | | | | | | |
| Compulsory part of (an)other subject(s) | | | | | | | |
| Compulsory curriculum principle (all or several subjects) | | | | | | | |
| Elective career education subject or similar | | | | | | | |
| Part of (an)other elective subject(s) | | | | | | | |
| Part of curricular activities | | | | | | | |
| Part of extra-curricular activities | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Centre model | | | | | | | |
| Centre inside school/university | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Specific education centre outside school/university | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| National Employment Service centre for the unemployed | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Centre for all citizens, in/out of education/labour market | | | | | | | |
| Specialist model | | | | | | | |
| School counsellor (full-time) | | | | | | | |
| School counsellor (part-time) | | | | | | | |
| School psychologist | | | | X | X | X | X |
| School pedagogue, sociologist or social worker | X | | | | | X | |
| National Employment Service guidance specialist | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Semi-specialist model | | | | | | | |
| Class teacher | X | | | | | | |
| Subject teacher | X | | | | | | |
| (Deputy) school director | X | | | | | | |
| National Employment Service employment counsellor | X | X | | | | | |
| Virtual model | | | | | | | |
| Website | X | X | | | | | X |
| Web-based interactive | X | | X | X | | | X |
| Email-based | X | | | | X | | X |

Note: X indicates that a modality is operational in Serbia.

Source: Zelloth (2009). This taxonomy matrix – slightly modified for this report – was developed in the framework of a comparative analysis on demand for career guidance in EU neighbouring countries.

TABLE 4.1 shows how the curriculum model of career guidance in Serbian educational institutions seems to be the least recognised model; furthermore, a wide range of other delivery modalities and methodologies in career guidance remain untapped to date. In particular ‘work-tasting’, exploring the world of work and career management skills are heavily underrepresented.

RECOMMENDATION 3

- To revisit and take on board the ETF recommendation of 2004 regarding the performance of a feasibility study on different options for career guidance in the education sector, with particular emphasis on exploring possible curricular models of guidance.
- To invest in large-scale and systemic capacity building measures once the most appropriate delivery agents have been identified and agreed and competence and selection criteria have been defined. This should not prevent continued support for ongoing and emerging career guidance activities and bottom-up initiatives.

Another major challenge is to gradually shift career guidance provision towards the modern lifelong guidance paradigm. The National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan do not refer to lifelong guidance explicitly, but their philosophy and spirit implicitly subscribe to the lifelong guidance paradigm. The move towards the new paradigm entails at least the following three dimensions.

Opening up access to career guidance services over the entire lifespan through a wider range of providers than in the past

Concerning the lifespan dimension, the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy already identifies four major age groups (under 14, 15–18, 19–30, and over 30). However, apart from talented youth, it does not yet differentiate between these groups according to specific qualities such as special at-risk groups (e.g. those in transition from school-to-work, school dropouts, early school leavers, people with disabilities, migrants or other vulnerable groups).

Regarding a wider range of providers, which might ensure better coverage of population groups in general, the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy emphasises the relevance of the local dimension and networking between different providers. An important role could be played by the more than 100 youth offices that have recently been established and which will be further extended throughout the country. These offices are the only youth-centred structure covering Serbia at the municipal level and therefore the entire country. If well equipped, appropriately staffed (not just with volunteers) and strongly networked with other agencies and providers, these offices could greatly contribute to increasing awareness of, and widening access to, career guidance services in Serbia, in particular regarding career information. Examples of guidance services offered by youth agencies can be found in Estonia (network of regional youth information and counselling centres), in the Czech Republic (youth centres gather information on educational pathway possibilities for all ages) and in Ireland (youth centres managed by a variety of youth organisations provide information on a wide number of issues). In Ireland, a counselling service is also available in the adult education sector to help clients assess their current situation and look at the options open to them in the future (Eurydice, 2009).

The shift from a psychological to a pedagogical and labour market-oriented delivery method of career guidance provision

Like all the former Yugoslav republics, Serbia has a long and well developed tradition in the psychological approach to career guidance. This feature might be a barrier to more modern career guidance delivery methods. Career guidance services nowadays, in the EU and elsewhere, are shifting from a psychological to a pedagogical and labour market approach. To a certain extent a diversified approach has existed in Serbia since the late 1960s, with career guidance delivered to some groups as psychological counselling and to others as more pedagogical support to achieve labour market goals and find employment. This international trend has recently and newly affected Serbia, but a more decisive shift could be encouraged from traditional services based on psychological tests (‘test and tell’) towards more modern approaches that combine pedagogical processes and methods aimed at developing career management skills with those that emphasize the exploration of the world of work (‘from testing to tasting’).

In terms of delivery agents, the latter suggests that, provided certain professional and quality criteria are met, not only can psychologists work in career guidance, but also a range of other actors including teachers, social pedagogues and information specialists. Career guidance and counselling need to provide a multi-faceted response to different target groups with different backgrounds, so a multi-disciplinary area combining different delivery methods is likely to be successful. If larger numbers of guidance practitioners in Serbia became more diversified with regard to their professional background, this might be beneficial with regard to strengthening their identity and development and lead to the creation of a new professional association that would be independent from the one for psychologists and traditional counsellors.

Moving from an expert advice approach to self-help and learning of career management skills and from individual guidance to group guidance

Resource-efficient approaches are an issue in countries like Serbia that face the dual challenge of expanding their guidance systems and changing the mode of delivery in a context of limited resources. Career information and guidance could be fairly cost-efficient if self-help skills and facilities were fostered, provided they complemented existing or planned information centres and guidance specialists rather than replaced them for people who truly needed them. Such means could include computer-based self-help facilities, telephone helplines, web-based career information systems that offer self-assessment tests or even online counselling. This focus on learner self-empowerment and career management skills (for example, through career education embedded in the curriculum) could help the shift towards a modern career guidance paradigm and prove a cost-efficient approach to reaching out to larger target groups such as entire generations of young people.

RECOMMENDATION 4

- To gradually adopt the modern paradigm of career guidance by opening up access to career guidance services for citizens over the entire lifespan, in particular for groups which are not yet sufficiently covered by such services.
- To change delivery methods from the traditional psychological approach ('test and tell') to a more pedagogical and labour market-oriented approach (instead of 'testing', allowing the individual a 'tasting' of the world of work and educational opportunities).
- To introduce career management skills in secondary and higher education curricula and, where appropriate, in training modules for the unemployed and adults.

Although the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy is also based on the reform goals defined by other documents (such as the Serbian National Strategy for Accession to the EU), a specific challenge for Serbia as a potential candidate country and applicant for EU membership is to accelerate EU integration and cooperation in the career guidance area in a timely manner. This could be achieved in the five ways described below.

Adoption of EU career guidance priorities

These were put forward in the two 2004 and 2008 Council resolutions. In a nutshell, the 2008 resolution invites EU member states to:

- strengthen the role of lifelong guidance within lifelong learning strategies, to make use of policy and practice reviews at the national level and to use the opportunities provided by EU funds;
- with a view to supporting the lifelong career transitions of citizens, make use of guiding principles related to four priority areas – encouraging the lifelong acquisition of career management skills, facilitating access by all citizens to career guidance services, developing quality assurance in guidance provision and encouraging coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders;
- strengthen career guidance in the curriculum at all levels of education, covering primary, general secondary and vocational education schools, through a new integrated curriculum approach for guidance.

On comparing EU principles and priority areas in career guidance policy with Serbian policy goals and recent development trends, some affinity is evident although the extent varies by policy area. **FIGURE 4.1** shows that the issue of access features high on the Serbian policy agenda, followed by policy coordination and cooperation. However, quality assurance regarding guidance provision does not appear to be a priority in Serbia and career management skills hardly features on the Serbian agenda at present.

FIGURE 4.1 SERBIAN KEY LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE POLICIES: AFFINITIES WITH EU PRIORITIES

Note: The affinity levels show the degree of correspondence (very low/low/medium/high) between the Serbian career guidance strategy and EU priority areas.

Participation in European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) activities

Facilitated by the ETF, Serbia as well as other EU candidate and potential candidate countries, for the first time, can participate in ELGPN activities. This EU-wide career guidance policy initiative was launched in 2007 and is financed by the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme until 2013. Serbia is not yet eligible for this programme but, since 2010, it can participate at its own cost in plenary meetings, workshops, field visits and peer learning events. A national delegation of up to four representatives (from education, employment, youth and NGO sectors) can participate in the ELGPN, coordinated by one lead organisation in the country. Participating in this policy network could help Serbia accelerate EU integration in the career guidance area as the ELGPN work programme is focused on the four EU priority areas mentioned above. Involvement in the ELGPN could also facilitate learning from policies and practices in EU member states and help build useful contacts and potential partnerships with different EU member states. Invitations to ELGPN events are by ministerial invitation from the EU member state organising an event.

Preparation for involvement in the Euroguidance network

This network of national resource centres located in EU member states, European Economic Area and pre-accession countries was set up in the early 1990s. Euroguidance links career guidance systems in Europe and its functions are to promote mobility by helping guidance counsellors and individuals to better understand the opportunities available to European citizens throughout Europe. It is co-financed by the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme. The national resource centres mainly serve national objectives, e.g. through a methodological function in career guidance, supporting system development, training for practitioners, etc. They vary according to the national context in terms of functions, focus, size, structure and hosting organisation and Serbia could capitalise on this variety in developing its own national centre. Peer learning activities, partnership agreements or light twinning would be some of the ways how to do this.

Learning from European career guidance tools and instruments

In the last decade, a large stock of knowledge, tools and instruments have been developed at the European level, mainly by the European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (2002–06) as a resource for EU member states. Serbia could explore and capitalise on these instruments, which include: *Career guidance: A handbook for policy makers*; *Improving lifelong guidance policies and systems: Using common European reference tools*; *Common reference points for quality assurance systems for guidance provision*; and *Key features of lifelong guidance systems*. These tools could stimulate reflection and draw inspiration for experimenting and testing of new approaches in Serbia.

Enhanced international networking in general

Linking with international networks and initiatives in career guidance may provide further stimulus and indirectly help towards EU integration. Some examples are: the biennial International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy (next to take place in Hungary in December 2011), the annual conferences of the International Association of

Educational and Vocational Guidance (particularly useful for guidance policymakers and practitioners from the education sector) and FEDORA-European Forum for Student Guidance events (suitable for career guidance centres for higher education).

RECOMMENDATION 5

- To accelerate EU integration and cooperation in the career guidance area by taking into account the priorities of the 2004 and 2008 Council resolutions.
- To capitalise on European career guidance tools and instruments and to make preparations for involvement in Euroguidance and its national resource centres.
- To make use of the opportunity to participate in European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network activities and to enhance international networking in general.

Despite the fact that print-based and web-based career information has improved in recent years, it remains fragmented and limited. The National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan acknowledged this shortcoming by proposing the creation of career information points, brochures, manuals and internet and other informative materials to be disseminated through the network of centres and youth offices. Moreover, mutual support between different web-based providers and website innovation and modernisation is encouraged.

All this will require an efficient coordination structure between the different creators and providers of information. This should be a priority from the outset, since sound and user-friendly career information is central and highly relevant to career guidance. Thought could be given to building a comprehensive national career information system with a lifelong guidance perspective that is managed centrally, delivered by multiple actors and with access points at the local level.

A national web-based career information system would need an institutional home where it could be managed and updated regularly (this could be the future national resource centre). Career information should also pay attention to the key stakeholders of parents and employers. For parents, a widely disseminated guide or resource kit on how to best provide informal guidance to children regarding study and career choices could add value to the many initiatives already foreseen by the Action Plan. With regard to employers, it will be important to ensure a regular flow and exchange of information on new developments in the world of work and companies, existing degrees and acquired qualifications in order to feed the career information system with qualitative and first-hand information.

RECOMMENDATION 6

- To introduce a national, comprehensive career information system (both print-based and web-based) which embraces the individual activities foreseen in the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy's Action Plan. Managed centrally (e.g. by the future national resource centre) and delivered locally by existing structures and access points, this national career information system could serve different target groups from a lifelong guidance perspective.

Last but not least, a mammoth challenge will be to improve the quality and effectiveness of career guidance services in Serbia. The National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy rightly stresses the need for basic standards, to be established by a National Career Guidance and Counselling Programme from 2013 onwards. The standards are planned to be established for the six main career guidance activities, namely career information, career education, career counselling, employment counselling, career guidance and employee counselling. The National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy falls short, however, regarding the issue of the quality and effectiveness of guidance services. The terms 'quality', 'quality assurance' or 'effectiveness of services' do not appear among the 'principles of career guidance and counselling in Serbia' or anywhere in the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy document. The comparison with EU policy priorities made in Figure 4.1 above shows that quality is one of the lowest priorities on the Serbian current career guidance policy agenda. This issue will need to be addressed more seriously, along with the projected growth in the provision of guidance services over the mid- to long-term perspective, in order to ensure that users and citizens have access not just to services but to quality services.

Since the main factor ensuring quality can be attributed to human resources, namely career guidance practitioners, their human capital stock is of utmost importance. The Action Plan recognised this issue and identified capacity building and the development of professional career guidance resources as one of the areas to be enhanced from 2010 onwards. The main intervention foreseen is training for teachers, pedagogues and psychologists from primary and secondary

schools and higher education and the development of staff competencies for providing services to vulnerable groups. The effectiveness of these training measures could be possibly improved by:

- Embedding training in a strategic capacity building plan. This would make training more systematic and regular than in the past and which would combine different methods, e.g. a modular training programme with on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring, train-the-trainer and cascading programmes for multipliers and peer learning within Serbia and abroad.
- Including measures for ministry officials dealing with career guidance in their respective portfolios in the strategic capacity building plan. Special attention needs to be paid to strengthening capacities in the Ministry of Education, e.g. through the creation of a career guidance unit or by integrating the career guidance function in the (future) lifelong learning institutional structure in Serbia.
- Recognising and strengthening the role of universities in career guidance, since these should play a leading role in education and lifelong learning development. The enormous capacity bottlenecks faced by university career centres need to be addressed urgently and universities should be encouraged to take a pro-active role and responsibility for the consolidation and future development of these centres.

In addition to various training measures, a university-based post-graduate course in career guidance and counselling should be developed. The lack of a post-graduate course is currently probably the biggest gap in human resource development provision for guidance staff in Serbia, despite the fact that some modules on career guidance have been introduced to the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The post-graduate course could be inter-stakeholder-based (universities, ministries and employer organisations) and could involve a strong practice component; it could also actively seek to cooperate with an external higher education partner institution from the EU. The course, which would be particularly useful for the new generation of guidance practitioners (e.g. teachers), could be offered in a flexible way, whether full-time, part-time on-the-job or based on distance learning modalities.

Other ways of striving towards quality and enhanced effectiveness of services could be to establish a quality charter agreed by all actors and a monitoring and evaluation system for all career guidance activities, foster demand- and career guidance outcomes and impact-oriented research and surveys and develop a common competence framework for guidance practitioners from both the education and employment sectors.

RECOMMENDATION 7

- To improve the quality and effectiveness of career guidance services by developing a strategic capacity building plan that includes systematic training provision and the deployment of a university-based post-graduate course in career guidance and counselling.
- To strengthen career guidance capacities, particularly in the Ministry of Education, and to explore additional ways of achieving quality (e.g. developing a quality charter and a common competence framework for guidance practitioners, fostering research and surveys, etc).

5. SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The seven recommendations, reproduced here for convenience sake, aim to respond to both the challenges facing future career guidance development in Serbia (as discussed in Chapter 4) and to a European integration perspective on career guidance.

RECOMMENDATION 1

- To ensure that implementation of the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy and Action Plan – or at least substantial elements thereof – becomes part of and is financed by forthcoming EU pre-accession support programmes (2011 onwards) for both the education and employment sectors and/or by other large-scale bilateral or international donor programmes. This may meet a substantial proportion of the funding needed to match the state budgetary allocation for career guidance for the short- to mid-term period (2011–14). For the mid- to long-term perspective, as soon as Serbia becomes eligible, use could be made of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and later on of EU Structural Funds, both of which are an important additional source of financing for career guidance for a number of member states.

RECOMMENDATION 2

- To treat policy coordination in career guidance as a top priority and to establish, from the outset of implementation of the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy, a sound and well-functioning policy coordination mechanism (i.e. a national policy forum, council or committee).
- To explore whether the creation of a network of providers and initiatives at the national and local levels would add value to career guidance policy making and system development.

RECOMMENDATION 3

- To revisit and take on board the ETF recommendation of 2004 regarding the performance of a feasibility study on different options for career guidance in the education sector, with particular emphasis on exploring possible curricular models of guidance.
- To invest in large-scale and systemic capacity building measures once the most appropriate delivery agents have been identified and agreed and competence and selection criteria have been defined. This should not prevent continued support for ongoing and emerging career guidance activities and bottom-up initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 4

- To gradually adopt the modern paradigm of career guidance by opening up access to career guidance services for citizens over the entire lifespan, in particular for groups which are not yet sufficiently covered by such services.
- To change delivery methods from the traditional psychological approach ('test and tell') to a more pedagogical and labour market-oriented approach (instead of 'testing', allowing the individual a 'tasting' of the world of work and educational opportunities).
- To introduce career management skills in secondary and higher education curricula and, where appropriate, in training modules for the unemployed and adults.

RECOMMENDATION 5

- To accelerate EU integration and cooperation in the career guidance area by taking into account the priorities of the 2004 and 2008 Council resolutions.
- To capitalise on European career guidance tools and instruments and to make preparations for involvement in Euroguidance and its national resource centres.
- To make use of the opportunity to participate in European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network activities and to enhance international networking in general.

RECOMMENDATION 6

- To introduce a national, comprehensive career information system (both print-based and web-based) which embraces the individual activities foreseen in the National Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy's Action Plan. Managed centrally (e.g. by the future national resource centre) and delivered locally by existing structures and access points, this national career information system could serve different target groups from a lifelong guidance perspective.

RECOMMENDATION 7

- To improve the quality and effectiveness of career guidance services by developing a strategic capacity building plan that includes systematic training provision and the deployment of a university-based post-graduate course in career guidance and counselling.
- To strengthen career guidance capacities, particularly in the Ministry of Education, and to explore additional ways of achieving quality (e.g. developing a quality charter and a common competence framework for guidance practitioners, fostering research and surveys, etc).

ANNEX ETF FIELD VISIT TO SERBIA, 24–26 MARCH 2010 – LIST OF INTERLOCUTORS

| Name | Function | Institution |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Snezana Klasnja | Assistant Minister | Ministry of Youth and Sport |
| Gabriela Bratic | Head of the EU Programmes Department | Ministry of Education |
| Bojan Ristic | Head of the VET Department | Ministry of Education |
| Dragan Djukic | Director of Mediation in Employment and Career Planning | National Employment Service |
| Vesna Cekic | Head of Professional Orientation and Career Planning | National Employment Service |
| Dragana Miloradovic | Career Planning Counsellor | Belgrade Local Employment Service |
| Ivana Bozic | Head | Career Information and Professional Counselling Centre of Belgrade |
| Dejana Lazic | Director | Centre for Career Development, University of Belgrade |
| Jelena Manic | Coordinator of the Career Guidance and Counselling Centre | Belgrade Open School |
| Jadranka Dimov | Employment and Career Guidance Consultant | |

ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| CARDS | Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation |
| ELGPN | European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network |
| ETF | European Training Foundation |
| EU | European Union |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| RSD | Serbian dinar |
| SWOT | Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats |
| VET | Vocational education and training |

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