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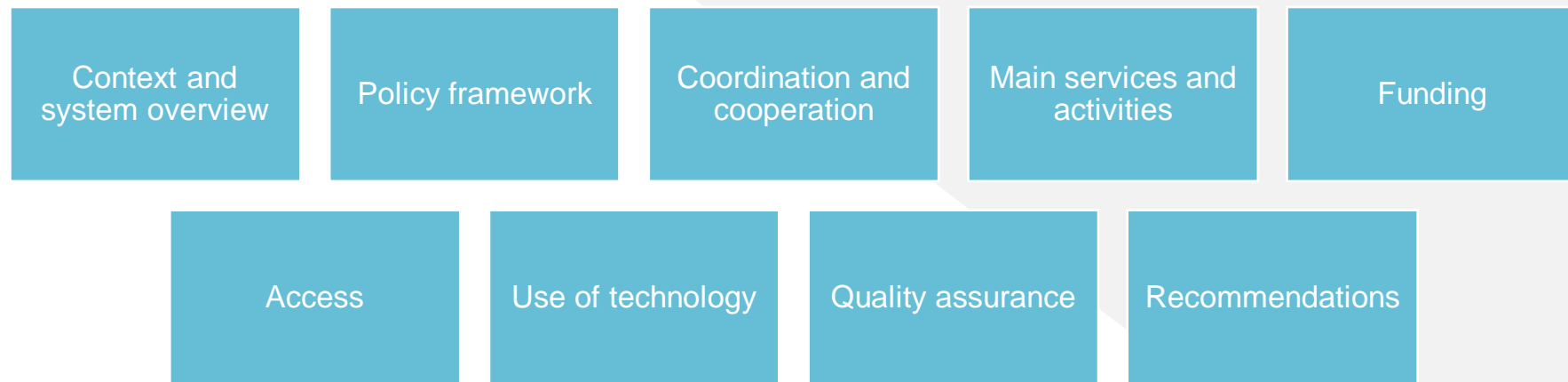
Career Development Support System Review in Serbia

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STRUCTURE OF THE REVIEW



POLICY FRAMEWORK, COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

Standards developed through cooperation among sectors. The most recent example of the actors` cooperation: Working Group for Career Guidance formed by the Agency for Qualifications.

Council for the National Qualifications Framework adopted Recommendations for implementation of the plan for application of the CGC standards in December 2019.

Stakeholders and providers of career development support activities cooperate occasionally at the national and local levels. However, this cooperation is task or project based and there is no permanent coordination mechanism.

COORDINATION AND COOPERATION - RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify an interministerial body mandated to coordinate career development support policies and practices by building on one of the existing working groups

Focus the work of the working group in the beginning around the **adaptation of all services to the CGC standards**

Coordinate implementation of Standards and update the Recommendations for the implementation of the plan for application of the standards

Develop blueprints for **local cooperation and coordination** for career education and career guidance in education as guideline for educational institutions, NES, parents, employer organisations, municipalities, youth workers, Local Employment Councils, Local CG Councils, etc.

SERVICES – EDUCATION

The well-developed regulatory framework establishes a solid base for various services.

Teams composed of teachers and professional associates are supposed to offer the most considerable portion of the CGC activities in secondary schools and professional orientation in elementary schools primarily as extracurricular and non-mandatory activities.

There are **no precise recent data about their work**, but available evidence shows that the extent and quality of the services offered to students vary significantly.

CGC in dual education programmes is additionally encouraged but mainly seen as a tool for promoting enrolment in dual VET and supporting the success of WBL programmes.

Optional subject Civic Education offers limited curricular coverage of career development-related topics.

The number and quality of career guidance services offered to students vary depending on the capacities. Some higher education institutions started with introducing elective modules on career management skills (CMS); however, further efforts are needed to promote CMS development.

SERVICES – EDUCATION - RECOMMENDATIONS

Collect the data on and **review** the professional orientation model for elementary schools against the career management skills framework, **update** it accordingly

Collect the data on and review existing practices in general secondary schools and non-dual VET against the career management skills framework, update it accordingly

Extend CGC services in dual VET from the current focus which is more about coaching to secure WBL is successful, support learners in staying in their chosen path, **towards developing career management skills** (as per standards)

Strengthen career management component of the curricula for Civic Education in elementary and secondary school and curriculum for entrepreneurship in secondary VET schools

Introduce minimum amount of class hours devoted to career conversations, promote and build on the experience of using a “Career Portfolio” from dual VET

Review career development support at the universities against CGC standards. Introduce more career management skills courses and explore the potentials for making them a mandatory activity throughout university studies.

SERVICES – UNEMPLOYED AND NEET

National Employment Service is the key career development support service provider for the unemployed and employed citizens within its registry. However, limited resources and low ICT usage impede more extensive and targeted outreach. The dominant career guidance mindset is to prevent wrong occupational choices and match skills supply to the labour market demand.

The NEET rate amounted to 15.9%, higher by 0.6 p.p. in 2020 compared to the previous year. A significant share of young people remain in NEET status for a year or longer. The Youth Package implemented by NES, numerous donor supported projects.

Other career development service providers are youth offices, civil society organizations and projects that demonstrate flexibility in tailoring approaches to target group needs. Lack of professional career practitioners, sustainability and continuity in service provision hinder their development.

SERVICES – UNEMPLOYED AND NEET - RECOMMENDATIONS

Widen the NES traditional approach from matching or adjusting skills supply to business needs in the market by accompanying this with preventive service offers for all citizens for career management skills development

Develop special services for NEETs, especially for rural areas, in line with CGC standards

- **Create partnerships for outreaching** to vulnerable groups and in particular NEETs to provide access to career guidance – build on youth offices, local mobile teams, etc.
- Introduce the modality for **enabling the civil society organisation** offering career development support following CGC Standards to obtain the status of employment service providers and manage to provide sustainable career guidance services to young NEETs and other groups at risk of social exclusion
- As NES must find new ways to **ensure better targeting of young NEETs** and other vulnerable categories, gradually increase NES capacity to promote the Youth Service Package among the younger generation

SERVICES – EMPLOYED

The key career development support service providers for employed persons are companies` HR departments.

Collective agreements available for public administration workers guarantee professional development, but no support in career guidance is foreseen.

The involvement of employers` associations is limited to training.

Small and medium companies fall behind the large ones in offering career development support to their workers. There is an increasing need for services for a growing group of self-employed that is left unattended and for those employed in the informal economy.

SERVICES – EMPLOYED – RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the framework of the interministerial working group, identify how **social partners and sectorial organisations can support SMEs** in career development support of workers.

Consider enhancing coordinated engagement of social partners and sectorial organizations in providing skills needs assessments and forecasting (for sectors) as important labour market information needed for career information activities.

Facilitate cooperation with adult learning and vocational education and training institutions for continuous professional development (in line with existing support for WBL cooperations).

Provide special services to workers in non-standards forms of employment.

FUNDING

The funding of career development support activities is provided from the central budget, grants and donations from international organizations or private sources.

MoLESVA and MoYS plan sources for active labour market measures implemented by the NES and programmes delivered by youth offices and CSOs to encourage youth employability.

The budget of the MoESTD and provincial educational authorities plans for covering teachers` and professional associates` salaries without incentivizing CGC activities.

Action Plan for Education Development Strategy foresees career guidance activities but states that no additional sources are needed.

Employment Strategy anticipates introducing a training voucher system, but no mention of vouchers for career development support.

Investments in the innovation of the resources available for practitioners for daily work are not regularly planned, but rather financed through donor-supported projects.

Obtaining the accreditation and the status of publicly recognized organizers for adult education, career guidance, and recognition of prior learning, as the option stipulated under the current strategic and regulatory framework, is expected to position VET schools, civil society organization and private providers in the market, as career development service providers and assure additional funding.

FUNDING - RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure **funding for professional staff** at local level in municipalities, aimed primarily at reaching vulnerable groups like NEETs

Identify **funding sources to support SMEs** and their staff in accessing career development support services

Make funds allocated for career guidance and counselling in education, employment and youth sectors explicit to be able to monitor input against output and outcomes on the bases of a baseline that should be defined to start real M&E activities;

Build on innovative ideas like the client participation in the financing of the service

Ensure **adequate funding for CGC practitioners** in educational institutions: tools, materials, etc.;

Include career counselling and career guidance **voucher system** or similar incentives for unemployed and employed/workers to be able to access to professional support and encouragement for lifelong career management.

ACCESS

NES provides services tailored for various vulnerable groups or hard to employ citizens and prioritizes their access to active labour market measures. However, only one-third of young unemployed is registered with the NES.

Data also show that people with disabilities, older employees, employees preparing for retirement, migrants, are less likely to be recognized by career guidance practitioners.

As high as 54,8% of young people stated that they have not participated in any career guidance and counselling activities, which shows that access to career development support remains a challenge even for a general population of young people.

ACCESS – RECOMMENDATIONS

Build capacities of career guidance practitioners from education, employment, and youth services in line with the CGC standards based on career management skills to increase the number and quality of services offered and assure access to career development support services in education, employment, and youth. Evaluate capacity building programmes regularly to assess if they lead to the development of career management skills among the end users, as well as practitioners.

Assure access to career education and career guidance and counselling for all students from primary till higher education in line with the CGC standards to tackle the issue of high numbers of young unemployed and inactive; thereby helping young people in Serbia to deal with continuous experience of difficulties in accessing the labour market, to find a stable job and remain in employment on the basis of career management skills

Explore ways to offer career education and career counselling at least once per year to all students, not just those enrolled in dual education programmes

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Due to an urge to shift online as caused by pandemics, almost all service providers adjusted their career development support services to the online or hybrid format, and some new ones were launched.

The Action plan for Education Development Strategy defines several indicators related to increasing digital competencies, but none specifies eGuidance or similar.

On the other side, there is an evident need among young people to seek online career development support.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY – RECOMMENDATIONS

Review existing online and digital services for CGC in educational institutions, employment (e.g. on LMI) and youth organisations (also from civil society and donor projects) and **develop a plan for integrating services into a one-stop entry platform** in the medium to long term

Leverage on ICT to support CGC practitioners in educational institutions to get access to latest tools, materials etc. in an effective and cost-efficient way

Update the interactive online platform “Guide for choosing an occupation” for elementary school pupils with the recent developments in VET including dual education profiles, and ensure continuous updating

Introduce **eGuidance** or similar services building on the digitalisation efforts foreseen in the Action plan for Education Development Strategy

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The qualifications of CGC practitioners vary as there are no master's or bachelor's degrees or at least short studies programmes and no licencing mechanisms.

Standards for the production and delivery of quality careers related information are stipulated within the Standards for career guidance and counselling services.

Numerous web-based materials providing career information are available, but they are neither comprehensive nor integrated. Another challenge is the usability and youth-friendliness of some information.

QUALITY ASSURANCE – RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduce legal objectives related to the initial and continuous professional development of career guidance practitioners' competence

Accredit private and civil society organisations offering trainings in line with the CGC standards

Introduce short programme studies for CGC in line with career management skills framework at the university level education, especially at those institutions offering initial education of teachers, psychology, adult education, human resources management and similar.

Along the planned activities within the Strategy for Education to further train teachers in CGC and develop “Professional guidelines for implementing professional orientation and CGC activities in all schools”, focus also on building their capacities to facilitate career conversations in different subjects, such as literature, science, etc.

Assure that training of RPL advisers is in line with the competencies for career guidance practitioners, in accordance with the Rulebook.

Prepare yearly reports on the application of the CGC standards in different sectors building on the good practice of the Agency for Qualifications and BOS

Shift from the mindset of career information provision to empowering clients, especially young and inactive, to search for relevant information, critically assess information sources, compare and collect information to be able to reach well informed career relevant decisions.

THREE PRIORITY POLICY AREAS TO LOOK AT

- 1) **Coordination and cooperation.**
- 2) **Capacity building for access.** Assure access to career education and career guidance and counselling **for all students** from primary till higher education and for more unemployed people.
- 3) **Use of Technology.** Review existing online and digital services for CGC and especially **career information**, and develop a plan for **integrating services into a one-stop entry platform** in the medium to long term. Involve user groups to ensure the user-friendliness of services. Build on platforms planned in Education and Employment Strategy.

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