

# **NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW – MONTENEGRO**

March 2022

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The report was coordinated, supervised and finalised by Mr Florian Kadletz, ETF Human Capital Development Expert.

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# 1. Context and system overview

## Background

Education, training and labour market systems are increasingly challenged by global developments such as digital transformation, globalisation, demographic change, climate change and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. All these have a profound impact on the lives of individuals and on society. The development of technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT), has boosted economic globalisation and opened new opportunities for people, but also created new risks.

Amidst these developments with uncertain outcomes, some things are certain: firstly, a fast-evolving world and a changing labour market require individuals to become real lifelong learners, to acquire new competences to cope with change and to adapt and further develop existing competences. Secondly, there is a growing demand for valid information on the changing labour markets and future prospects. This goes hand in hand with a growing need to support people in managing their more frequent and complex transitions within and between education and work. In this context, there is a greater need than ever for career development support. At the same time, career development support – that is, lifelong career guidance, in particular career education, and career development support for workers – is itself facing challenges in adapting to the new circumstances.

Against this background, the ETF engaged in reviewing the state of national/state-wide career development support systems in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The objective of the reviews is to describe existing capacities and the development potentials of career development support systems – not just services or policies – to inform policy and practice enhancement in a system approach, to support the selection of country priorities for further system development and future planning, and to inform ongoing and future EU and ETF activities, such as the Youth Guarantee and IPA. For more information about the conceptual approach to the reviews, please refer to the ETF-ILO publication 'Developing National Career Development Systems'.

The review was led by local experts under the coordination of the ETF and included (a) desk research and individual consultation interviews; (b) a national consultation meeting that involved all relevant stakeholders to clarify open questions from desk research, to add details and triangulate desk research findings by listening to different points of view from the ministries of education, labour and youth, social partner representatives, youth organisations, practitioners, employer organisations, sector representatives and researchers; (c) review report finalisation, translation and distribution; (d) discussion of findings with national authorities to identify priority areas for further system development; (e) a wide validation event to discuss the review findings and how to move forward in the priority areas identified; and (f) last revision of the report that is being published in both English and Montenegrin.

## 1.1 Context

Montenegro is a very small country in terms of area and population, with a total of 621 700 inhabitants in 2020 (MONSTAT, 2020). Montenegro is dedicated to improving economic development by reforming the labour market in order to provide a favourable business environment that attracts investors, creates opportunities for quality jobs and increases employment.

A clear increase in the employment rate is noticeable from 2014 to 2019 (from 50% to 56%) and a decrease in the unemployment rate (from 18% to 15%). However, the Montenegrin labour market is still characterised by a low activity rate (68%, compared to the EU average of 74% in 2018); the unfavourable age structure of employees; significant regional differences; the employment of foreign workers during the tourist season, the high informality of work, the high number of NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training), the reduction in the number of employees and the

growth in the number of unemployed. The long-term unemployment rate (11.5% in 2018) is extremely high compared to the EU (2.9%)<sup>1</sup>.

Age	Activity rate (%)	Employment rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Persons outside the labour force rate (%)
15+	54.6	46.5	14.8	45.4
15-89	54.8	46.7	14.8	45.2
15-24	37.3	26.0	30.2	62.7
25-49	78.9	66.9	15.2	21.1
50-64	53.7	50.1	6.8	46.3
65+	7.3	6.8	6.2	92.7
15-64	63.3	53.8	15.0	36.7
20-64	68.3	58.7	14.1	31.7
55-64	44.9	42.7	4.9	55.1
15-67	61.8	52.6	14.9	38.2

Table 1 – Percentage of the activity of the population by age groups, Montenegro 3rd quarter 2021 (MONSTAT)<sup>2</sup>.

The Montenegrin economy was hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. It is estimated that the country will take some 15-20 months to reach the pre-crisis growth levels (World Bank, 2021). GDP increased by 4.1% in 2019, and fell by 15.2% in 2020, and is estimated to grow again by 7.1% in 2021. The extent of the informal economy in Montenegro, which stands at around 30% of GDP, remains high and is among the largest in the region. Wage-subsidy measures implemented in response to the pandemic have prompted employers to formalise employment to some extent. However, disincentives for formalisation remain.

The high number of NEETs has been a concern in Montenegro. Even before the pandemic, the rate of young people (15-24) not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) increased from 2018 (16.2%) to 2019 (17.3%), indicating that there are significant difficulties in transitioning from education to employment, paired with a mismatch of skills provided through formal education and those required on the labour market. While the figures decreased to 17.3% before the COVID-19 crisis, they climbed again to 21.1% in 2020, which could also indicate weak job creation. School-to-work transition has been made more difficult due to the pandemic. To address this challenge, in July 2021 the government committed itself to introducing the Youth Guarantee Scheme.

In Montenegro the key challenges include increasing employment among women and young people and tackling long-term unemployment. The positive labour market trends that could be observed before March 2020 were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing halt in economic activity. The pandemic had a significant negative impact on youth employment (15-24 year-olds) (17.6% in Q3 2020 compared to 29.5% in Q3 2019) and unemployment (25.2% in 2019 compared to 36% in 2020).

Montenegro is facing both internal and external migration flows. People are moving primarily from the northern region towards the central and southern parts of the country (and from rural to urban areas), causing depopulation in the northern municipalities. As a result, educational provision in this region is not as rich as in the central and southern parts of Montenegro, especially in smaller towns which have only one secondary school. It is not so common for secondary school students to travel to other

<sup>1</sup> <https://javnepolitike.me/en/policy/labour-and-employment/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=1897&pageid=22>

nearby towns offering a wider choice of schools in the north of Montenegro. There are some higher education faculties in the north of Montenegro, but the State university is thinking of shutting them down. Outward migration is mainly directed towards the EU Member States.

## Qualification gaps

The quality of the whole education system has been a concern and priority for the Montenegrin government for many years. In the field of higher education, qualifications and skills do not match labour market demands and there are limited links with research<sup>3</sup>. In the area of VET, many curricula lack relevance for the world of work. A major concern is the lack of practical experience in both schools and universities. However, Montenegro is committed to VET reforms. Montenegro has signed the Osnabrück Declaration and the European Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience to push ahead with reforms.

There is a structural mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market, as demonstrated by data of the Public Employment Service of Montenegro. Employers also believe there is a mismatch between skills and knowledge which the students acquire in the educational system and those demanded in the labour market. Consequently, and facing the challenge regarding the need to improve labour force skills due to changes in labour market demand, and due to an increasing need for the use of new technologies and the mismatch between demand and supply of skills which hinders economic development and new job creation, the concept of new apprenticeship at the employer's was introduced in the academic year 2017/2018 (referred to as dual education)<sup>4</sup>.

Far more men than women work in Montenegro so increasing job opportunities for women should be central to the jobs agenda. With less than half of women aged 15-64 employed, bringing more women into the labour market can make a major contribution to economic growth and higher living standards<sup>5</sup>.

The most vulnerable groups on the labour market remain women, young people and people with low skills, while long-term unemployment continues to be a structural challenge. While the unemployment rate among women is only slightly higher than that among men (18.4% for women and 17.4% for men in 2020), the gender employment gap remains high, at 37.9% for women compared to 50% for men in 2020. High long-term unemployment persists, at 13.4% in 2020, with 65.5% of all unemployed people being long-term unemployed in Q3 2020. The highest share of unemployed people continues to be those with lower educational attainment, but the pandemic impact has also fuelled an increase in young people who are not actively searching for a job and end up discouraged and inactive.

## Age structure of population

Although its total population has increased slightly in recent years, Montenegro is seeing significant population aging. Between 2010 and 2016, the 45-49 age group declined by 8.1% although the 55-59 group increased by 4.1%. Far more alarming is the change in the 60-64 group, which shot up by 31.8%<sup>6</sup>.

## Recent political changes

Since 2020, Montenegro has had a new government, with major restructuring still ongoing, but the government is no longer in power and what lies ahead of Montenegro is either formation of a new government or extraordinary elections. The government formed in 2020 intended to base its work on seven development pillars, as follows: the green economy, digital transformation, regional cooperation and connectivity, improvement of competitiveness, social protection, an equal opportunities society, and good governance. In November 2021, the government announced the 'Europe Now' programme, which sets the strategic goal of Montenegro's economic policy – achieving smart, sustainable, and

<sup>3</sup> Mismatch Between Education and Labour Market Needs, 2016, Employers Federation, <http://poslodavci.org/en/publications/mismatch-between-education-and>

<sup>4</sup> <file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/montenegro-economic-reform-programme-2021-2023.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/787451545030793133/pdf/Montenegro-Growth-and-Jobs.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/787451545030793133/pdf/Montenegro-Growth-and-Jobs.pdf>

inclusive economic growth that will contribute to improving the quality of life of all its citizens. This ambitious plan aims to increase the living standards of all citizens, improve the business and investment environment and reduce the grey economy in the labour market. 'Europe Now' is based on the willingness of the state to give up part of the revenue in favour of the employee and employer, thus creating an environment for new job opportunities and expanding the tax base. Citizens generally have high expectations from this programme as it has brought an increase in their salaries.

### **The existence of geographic isolation or social vulnerability patterns (remote villages, migrations, etc.)**

Despite a slight improvement, geographical disparities remain large. Roma and people with disabilities face additional challenges in integrating into the labour market, despite the continued support for employment and education programmes targeting these groups.

## **1.2 System overview**

Career guidance has been present in Montenegro for a long time, but to a larger extent it was devoted to the unemployed and offered by the Public Employment Service (PES). The first initiatives to have the whole-system approach were launched through projects dealing with labour market and education reforms. The initial project with which the career guidance programme in Montenegro started fully was the Labour Market Reform and Labour Force Development IPA project (2008-2012). The project resulted in development of the first Strategy for lifelong career guidance (2011-2015) in Montenegro, a teacher training programme for secondary schools, an appropriate manual for teachers and workbook for students in secondary schools. The project resulted in the opening of centres for providing information and professional counselling (CIPS) within the Public Employment Service (PES) in nearly one third of Montenegrin municipalities and better cooperation between schools and CIPS.

Other projects, such as the project conducted by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) on designing the transition of young people to the world of work in the Western Balkans (2008-2011), resulted in training programmes for primary school teachers and appropriate manuals for teachers, and the development of the curriculum for the elective subject 'Professional orientation in primary school'. Another project, 'Modernisation of educational programmes and teacher training, 2016-2017', implemented by the British Council, addressed career guidance in vocational schools.

As can be seen, the worlds of employment and education were the main drivers of establishing a career guidance system. The major stakeholders dealing with career guidance and counselling (CGC) are described below.

The **Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS)** is responsible for national policy-making in education. It sets directions for career guidance at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) and its major target groups are school and university students.

The **National Europass and Euroguidance Centre** has been established within the Ministry of Education. The main goal is to promote the European dimension in career guidance, encourage international activities and mobility, and promote Europass documents in Montenegro.

The **Bureau for Education Services** accredits and provides training programmes for school career guidance teams and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating career guidance with the national VET agency, schools and the MESCS).

The **National VET Agency** organises the accreditation of training programmes for VET education with the MESCS and provides training for VET school career guidance teams.

The institutions providing CGC services are primary and secondary schools (general and VET) and public and private universities.

**School teams providing career guidance** (in primary and secondary schools) are responsible for planning and implementing CGC activities at school level.

The **Careers Centre at the public university** provides individual and group information, professional counselling, psychological testing, career planning, workshops for students on career management skills and open days at schools and the university.

The **Ministry of Economic Development (MED)** is responsible in the field of the economy, defines labour market relations, and focuses on the development of human resources and the promotion of forms of employment such as entrepreneurship and self-employment, including career guidance activities.

The **Public Employment Service (PES)**, closely linked to MED, provides labour market information services for the unemployed people. Until recently, it has provided career guidance information and counselling through local centres for career guidance (CIPS). These centres were also open to students and the employed, and their staff also visited schools and informed them about possible educational pathways.

The activities of the **Chamber of Economy** are focused on creating the most favourable business environment and providing a large number of educational activities for employers and employees.

The **Employers Federation of Montenegro** gathers entrepreneurs, SMEs, large economic entities and employers' associations at sector and municipal level, representing the independent voice of business in Montenegro.

The **NGO sector** is very agile and proactive in providing CGC services in Montenegro. They seem to be far more flexible and innovative in reaching out to all those who are in need.

**Private career guidance providers** are only of recent date and hired by companies to assess the training needs of their employees and help with their growth and development. The most common clients are banks, IT companies, hotels, etc.

Career guidance providers had to adjust their services during the COVID-19 crisis. Interventions included the temporary suspension of face-to-face services during lockdowns, the strengthening of distance services (by telephone and online), and the development of training tools to help career guidance advisors deliver services from a distance. Online jobseeking and career guidance portals were strengthened and became popular sources of up-to-date information on labour market changes<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://zaposli.me/usluge/>; <https://prekoveze.me/savjeti-i-uputstva>;

## 2. Policy framework

This report uses the term ‘career guidance and counselling’ (CGC) to refer to services intended to assist individuals to make well-informed educational, training and occupational choices. In Montenegro career guidance and counselling is also known by different terms, including career orientation, career development, career counselling, professional/vocational orientation, educational and vocational guidance and vocational psychology. The Programme of Lifelong Career Guidance and Counselling 2021-2023 uses these two definitions:

**CAREER GUIDANCE.** A range of activities enabling individuals at any age or stage of their lives to identify their own abilities, competences and interests, to make decisions about their education, training and profession and to manage the course of their lives in the field of learning, work and other fields in which they can acquire and apply abilities and competences.

**CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING.** An organised system of social and professional activities which offers continual assistance to an individual during their entire career development, with free choice of preferences and pathways in education and professional activities with the aim of achieving professional quality in line with personal qualities and labour market needs for certain occupations.

A number of laws, in particular those regulating education and employment, mention career guidance, either directly or indirectly.

Laws in the field of education, in particular the **General Law on Education**, emphasise the need for personal development according to preferences and abilities. This concept is also stressed in laws at all education levels (primary school, secondary school, vocational education, higher education and adult education).

The **Law on primary education** states that the objective of primary education is ‘the development of professional orientation with students’.

The **Law on VET** explicitly states that Objectives of VET are ‘...’provision of career guidance’.

The **Law on National Vocational Qualifications** (2010) defines many institutions that analyse the labour market situation and give this information to jobseekers and employers.

Other relevant legislation is the **Law on Mediation in Employment and Entitlements during Unemployment** (2019), which regulates relations in the field of employment, indicates opportunities for employment and self-employment, and encourages career guidance for unemployed and employed people.

The **Law on Youth** (2019) emphasises the importance of youth education and preparation for the labour market.

Regarding strategies and long-term plans, there is also a variety of documents that recommend career guidance and counselling.

The umbrella strategy is the **Strategy for lifelong career guidance** (2011-2015 and 2016-2020), followed by the **Programme of lifelong career guidance and counselling 2021-2023**, which will soon be adopted.

These two strategies were the most important for establishing and developing the CGC system. They were designed by multiple stakeholders involved in the process (the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, National VET Agency, Bureau for Educational Services, University of Montenegro, Public Employment Service, VET schools, Employers Federation of Montenegro and Chamber of Economy of Montenegro). However, as the Ministry of Education had the lead role in the process, the focus of the strategies is on the education system.

The strategic goals of the Programme of lifelong career guidance and counselling 2021-2023 are as follows:

1. Teachers, pupils, students, parents and adults are better informed about opportunities for career counselling and career development.
2. The reform of career guidance and counselling in educational institutions (which involves designing new programmes for different age groups, students and adults and training teaching staff to implement new programmes).
3. Quality assurance of career guidance and counselling.
4. Intersectoral cooperation in career guidance and counselling.

There are also employment and youth sector strategies which talk about career guidance.

The **National Employment Strategy 2021-2025** highlights that 'CGC mechanisms need to be strengthened; the transition from school to work needs to be improved and Labour Force Survey methodology needs to be methodologically developed.. It also defines the following activities relating to career guidance:

*'The youth programmes need to involve an individualised approach in providing support to joining the labour market, ..., with simultaneous development of specific skills, such as digital, green, language and entrepreneurial skills and career management skills.'*

*'Description of the measure: professional rehabilitation is the process implemented with the aim of empowering people with disabilities for social and work integration. It involves measures and activities enabling these people to prepare themselves for the labour market in a relevant manner, train for the work, retain their jobs, get promoted on the job or change their professional career.'*

*'Implementation of professional orientation programmes for career guidance teams in primary and secondary schools (at least 30 primary schools involved in 2021)'*

The **Strategy for VET Development in Montenegro (2020-2024)** explicitly promotes a) enhancing the capacities of school CGC teams; and b) organising lectures, workshops, round tables and media presentations on the importance of CGC for students and parents.

The **Strategy for inclusive education in Montenegro (2019-2025)** proposes: *development and accreditation of the services provided by mediators in CGC and employment; and development of tests for CGC for SEN students and strengthening the capacities of practitioners in schools, CIPSS and resource centres for working with SEN students.*

The **Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2021-2023** of the Montenegrin government prescribes the implementation of the professional orientation programmes for career teams in primary and secondary schools in each year. The ERP is a top-level document of crucial importance as all other strategies and programmes need to be in line with it.

The **Youth Strategy 2017-2021** uses the term 'career counselling' when it refers to career guidance. *'It is necessary to further enhance activities to improve career counselling in primary, secondary and higher education through Centres for Information and Professional Counselling, and the Centre for Career Development at the University of Montenegro. Also, it is necessary to provide career counselling for all young people.* These objectives were set by this strategy:

- improve existing areas and develop new areas (including online career counselling) and the integration of youth support systems (career counselling programmes and services with community-based resources – schools, youth clubs, NGOs and the business community);
- develop programmes to improve the knowledge of young people on the importance of career planning, in line with the Lifelong Career Guidance Strategy;
- develop tools for out-of-institution provision of career guidance and counselling services;
- improve existing programmes and develop new programmes fostering youth activity, particularly for the long-term unemployed and vulnerable young people, such as young women, people with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, rehabilitated substance users, etc., including the development of a mobile app and other innovative tools for jobseekers (targeting primarily young people) and

develop a peer education programme on youth employability (employed – inactive unemployed young people).

As of 2018, the establishment of the **National Euroguidance Centre**, which is tasked with implementation, coordination and promotion of the 'Euroguidance Initiative' has led to the promotion of the European dimension in career guidance and counselling and the provision of information on lifelong career guidance and mobility – it is the focal point for all the stakeholders involved in the process. The services of this centre are primarily intended for experts in the field of CGC, including: career counsellors/practitioners; decision-makers at national and local level; pedagogues and psychologists; teachers and educational institutions that implement career guidance and counselling programmes, activists and NGOs dealing with career guidance and counselling, employability and mobility issues; representatives of companies, associations or organisations dealing with career guidance and counselling issues; and researchers and scientific institutions engaged in research relating to career guidance and counselling or staff training.

### 3. Coordination and Cooperation

This section describes aspects relating to formal coordination, strategic leadership, governance and cooperation between stakeholders.

There are so many strategies for the development of different areas in Montenegro. However, they often seem to be misaligned with one another and many strategies relating to education, employment and the labour market do not mention CGC or cooperation for CGC (the Strategy for the development of women's entrepreneurship 2021-2024, the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025, the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of the RE population 2021-2025, etc.)

Despite the adoption of the first CGC Strategy as early as in 2011, services within the education, training, employment, community and private sectors still remain fragmented, are rarely well coordinated, coherently planned or well integrated. A lack of effective collaboration both between different government departments and between the government and other stakeholders in developing and planning career guidance services is evident.

The National Coordination Body was founded to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy for lifelong career orientation (2016-2020). The body involved representatives of all the stakeholders who participated in designing the Strategy: the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour Market and Social Welfare, Public Employment Service, Employers Federation, Chamber of Economy, Bureau for Educational Services, National VET Agency, University of Montenegro and Education Trade Union of Montenegro. However, the body did not function to the best of its abilities, had rare face-to-face meetings and mostly communicated with its members by telephone or email. This could imply that CGC was not high on the agenda of national authorities, so a stimulus was needed. With the establishment of the National Euroguidance Centre these challenges should be overcome as one of the Centre's functions is coordination of all the stakeholders.

Too often, the requirements of institutions or the needs of practitioners, rather than user needs, determine what services are provided and how they are provided. The social partners and stakeholders other than the government have no role in the development of guidance policies and in-service provision. As a result, people who need career guidance can find it difficult to get access to services that meet their needs, and services are inconsistent between sectors such as education and employment.

#### 3.1 Promoting coordination, cooperation and good governance

Career guidance and counselling in Montenegro is delivered by a variety of providers, both public (such as the public employment service, public education and training institutions, and dedicated public career guidance centre) and private (such as employers, private training institutions and private providers). This variety is on the one hand desirable as it enables service delivery tailored to the needs of specific target groups. However, on the other hand, it often results in a complex and possibly fragmented system that may be difficult to manage.

#### Cooperation of the world of education and world of work

One of the burning issues of education system quality in Montenegro is the lack of graduates' skills that are supposed to be acquired during practical training. The Montenegro 2021 Report, European Commission, 2021, Chapter 26 (Education and Culture) suggests that Montenegro should establish an adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanism for practical learning, in both higher and VET level education<sup>8</sup> (this points to the need for further improvement of cooperation between educational institutions and employers).

<sup>8</sup> <file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Montenegro%202021%20report.PDF>

As a result, some measures were introduced in both sectors. The 'dual education' concept has been in practice since 2017 for 3-year VET students. It has brought VET schools much closer to employers. There is, however, often a lack of cooperation with the local PES office and other potential providers of CGC.

The Economic Reform Programme 2021-2023 envisages the establishment of a system of continuous monitoring of the quality of practical education among employers. Also, it is predicted that by 2023 45% of students will be employed after completing dual education. In addition, the Programme envisages the reform of programmes in undergraduate and master studies in order to strengthen practical teaching. The number of unemployed university graduates is forecast to be reduced by 10% by 2023.

The Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education in Montenegro until 2024 envisages the strengthening of the dual education system, with special emphasis on the employability of 75% of students with employers with whom they have completed the practical part of classes in the first 6 months after completion of the training; the training of 80% of practical education instructors and 2 000 teachers in accordance with the procedures and rules for the development of key competencies and digital literacy; and the harmonisation of enrolment policy with labour market needs in order to achieve a percentage of students who are educated in educational programmes for 3 years of at least 25% in relation to the total number of students in vocational education.

The Higher Education Development Strategy 2020-2024 envisages the harmonisation of the education system with labour market needs, with better recognition of bachelor's and master's degrees. The harmonisation of secondary and higher education, strengthening practical classes and increasing the share of persons aged 25 to 64 participating in lifelong learning programmes are just some of the priorities set out in this document<sup>9</sup>.

All of the above requires closer cooperation and well-functioning cooperation mechanisms.

### **Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders at local level**

Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders at local level could and should be strengthened. One such initiative is the project 'Activate women – increased capacities for labour market inclusion of disadvantaged women as a COVID-19 response measure', 2021-2022, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The overall objective of the project is to promote the inclusion of women (aged 25-49) in the labour market. The project supports the Public Employment Service (PES) in piloting an innovative active labour market programme (ALMP), specifically designed to overcome gender-specific barriers in Montenegro. It will be achieved through a combination of the following support measures:

- the profiling of individual needs, employment counselling, career guidance, job search and job placement support, according to individual needs throughout the duration of the programme;
- a monthly non-contributory unemployment allowance, payable for a maximum of 6 months as well as a lump sum contribution towards the costs of child-care (maximum of 6 months); and,
- subsidised on-the-job training to increase employability, provided for a period ranging from 3 to 6 months (according to the individual's profile).

It will link PES with local employers and education providers and other local stakeholders.

Another project, 'Further development of local employment initiatives in Montenegro', EU SOPEES 2019-2021 intends to support the development of local strategies and action plans for employment and human resource development. This will directly address local needs and challenges, and analyse the situation and trends in the labour market, taking into account relevant local partners.

The Help's project 'Improved access to the labour market for young people and women in the north-east of Montenegro', 2020, which is part of the joint EU and Montenegro Programme for

<sup>9</sup> <https://javnepolitike.me/en/policy/education/>

Employment, Education and Social Protection and co-financed by the European Union, and on-the-job training, accompanied by career guidance and counselling, were organised for a total of 40 unemployed persons, women and young people, in seven municipalities, mainly in the north of Montenegro. The working group of the local employment partnership consists of representatives of six municipalities, representatives of regional units of the Employment Agency from the North, the representatives of Regional Business Centre of Berane, representatives of employers and others.

An Analysis of Support for the Development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Montenegro through the Prism of Cooperation between Local and National Actors, has recently been presented to representatives of local governments and business support organisations, as part of the project 'Norway for you – Montenegro', supported by the Kingdom Norway. This analysis provided input for the development of proposals for strengthening institutional mechanisms that should enable more efficient and effective coordination and cooperation between the national and local levels in terms of providing support to the MSME sector.

## 3.2 Key civil society stakeholders

Non-governmental organisations are very active in implementing CGC activities. They tend to be very proactive and try to find out what their clients really need.

The NGO Psychological association of Montenegro is very active in the field of CGC. It produced a lot of useful tools and instruments for self-assessment or assessment of students in the first three cycles of primary school and secondary school. It also created instruments for assessment of children with special educational needs. This association is a home for all psychologists, not necessarily those working in schools.

The survey on the CGC system in Montenegro, Career Guidance and Counselling System in Montenegro, 2019, by the Ministry of Education, has proved that parents often play a decisive role when their children decide on their future. However, parents, too, feel that they are not well-informed about all the options, which opens a lot of space for their stronger involvement in CGC activities. The NGO Parental Association, which is well known in Montenegro for its activism, conducted some educational-informative activities in the past for parents with children in primary schools, mainly through informative workshops intended for parents about secondary school opportunities.

In line with the Law on Youth, youth services, such as youth clubs or youth centres are being set up with the aim of conducting youth activities and youth work. These associations are also active and usually work closely with the NGO sector. They act at local level and can be a valuable source for the implementation of CGC practice. Youth clubs/services exist in many towns of Montenegro and could be used better for career guidance and counselling/training/lectures, etc.

Some of the adult education and training institutions also offer career guidance services. However, guidance in adult education institutions usually takes the form of pre-entry guidance which supports adults to participate in adult learning and to decide which programme would be right for them. Guidance is built into the core of the programmes. Exit guidance supports graduates in applying what they have learned and in supporting their progress in further learning and work are not so common.

Over the past 15 years, Montenegro has done a lot to promote the importance of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial participation of young people through the participation of representatives of civil society organisations dealing with entrepreneurial education. It has promoted the creation of a quality network and the exchange of experiences among the public, businesses and the civil sector, which resulted in initiatives and models that promote and support programme development, entrepreneurial learning through the education system and other ways of education and employment. There are a lot of initiatives and business centres, both at local, regional and national level, providing a number of educational activities relating to starting one's own business.

There are also private employment companies, operating mainly online and trying to connect employers and potential employees. They also provide some advice on career guidance and

counselling in the form of blogs or instructions for writing a curriculum vitae or motivational letter and how to behave at a job interview, etc. They also offer their services to companies such as delivering various tests in order to assess the staff, coaching the companies, team-building activities, etc.

## 4. Main services and activities

In Montenegro, the PES is the most used career guidance provider, followed by education and training institutions. Private career guidance providers are slowly emerging, while employers still do not play a relatively important role. Employer groups, associations and trade unions play a smaller role. There are no dedicated public career guidance agencies (i.e. a provider that specialises in career guidance services and is publicly funded) except for the National Euroguidance Centre.

### 4.1 Education, training and work-based learning for young people

The concept of CGC in Montenegro in the education sector has been designed in such a way that these activities start in primary school.

Schools are ideal places to establish foundations of career education and guidance. Each school is supposed to set up a school team for career guidance (in both primary and secondary schools). The team comprises of up to 5 members, one of which must be a school pedagogue or psychologist while other members are school teachers or school management. The team is tasked with designing the annual career guidance plan, which defines goals and career guidance activities for students, teachers, school management and parents.

However, there are a few issues regarding this concept of school guidance. Firstly, those who provide career education and guidance in schools are often not career guidance specialists and often lack specialised training. They too often combine career guidance with other roles: either teaching other school subjects or providing counselling and guidance for personal problems and study difficulties. Often, career guidance staff do not have the resources that they need to do the job properly: a private space for career conversations; a library of up-to-date career information; a computer; or access to a telephone. In addition, school timetables do not provide optimal conditions for implementation of these activities as the students are busy at all times while at school. So, it is up to the school to organise CGC activities in the best possible way.

Career education is included in the curriculum at primary school level as a separate, elective subject which can be taken in 1 year of schooling with one 45-minute class per week. Other forms of implementation of these activities are cross-curricular, or extra-curricular activities. However, the most common way is the organisation of whole-class workshops, conducted by the class head teacher (who may not be qualified enough to practice CGC), and little supervision is conducted to check the quality of these classes.

Career education and guidance are often considered to be the sole responsibility of the specialist career guidance staff, rather than the joint responsibility of all members of the teaching staff.

Most of the CG activities implemented at schools is intended for final year students (Year 9 in primary schools and Year 4 in secondary schools) when they are choosing subjects; before the end of compulsory schooling or at the transition to upper secondary level or to work. The CG activities themselves tend to provide information on a choice of further schooling rather than deal with CG and counselling.

There is often only little information on the labour market and little contact with the public employment service.

Employer engagement in career guidance typically, but rarely, includes such activities as job or career fairs, talks and networking sessions, visits to companies, having employers talk to students about their business, work experience placements and job shadowing (rarely) and mentoring activities.

Career guidance and counselling activities at schools seem to be designed in such a way that they suit the organisational needs of the school rather than the career development needs of the student. They are not provided in a systematic manner, including all students throughout their schooling at a specific, designated time, but are performed more in an ad hoc manner, with some external agents

coming and presenting what they have, distributing informative books about further schooling or providing information about the job and labour market situation.

Within secondary general education career guidance, staff often spend a considerable amount of time preparing students to choose and compete for places at universities. The most common way is faculties coming to schools and presenting their programmes, or the organisation of fairs of higher education for graduate secondary school students. The possibilities of studying abroad and getting scholarships are also presented. There are no separate subjects or modules dealing with CGC, but the schools themselves design ways of conducting these activities. Some schools also offer individual guidance and counselling, conducted by a school psychologist or pedagogue.

In the field of VET, there is an overwhelming impression that VET students have already chosen their career, without any need for further support. However, as many graduates from 4-year VET programmes do continue their schooling and other students transit to the labour market, there is a lot to be done to improve the CGC situation. Unlike secondary general education, VET schools have much better access to the world of work and employers as many VET students spend some time in companies through their work-based learning and have first-hand experience of the occupation. As of 2017, Montenegro has incorporated the 'dual education model', which has proved to be beneficial in terms of easier transition to work. All VET students have to spend some time in companies as part of their practical training lessons, which provides an opportunity for them to get acquainted with the trade and the world of work.

At university level, the University of Montenegro has set up a Career Centre which provides individual and group information, professional counselling, psychological testing, career planning, workshops for students on career management skills, and open days at schools and the university. One of the main objectives of the Career Development Centre at the University of Montenegro is the strengthening of practical and soft skills, and therefore workshops on interesting, attractive and useful topics, lectures, seminars and group sessions with a psychologist are organised. Job opportunities, chances for the mobility of researchers and all other services offered through EURAXESS are promoted as well. The university also represents a link between the academic population and employers.

## 4.2 Support for the unemployed and NEETs

The Public Employment Service (PES) is one of the main organisations responsible for delivering career guidance services to adults. It matches and places, but they also accompanies clients in their job-search efforts. This means assessing clients' skills, teaching job search skills, suggesting available training options, giving referrals to other services and providing information on current and future skill needs in the labour market. PES counselling services are open to the unemployed, so being registered as unemployed is a necessary condition for accessing PES career guidance.

In Montenegro, CGC services provided through the PES are offered by a network of PES local branches at municipal level and the headquarters, which is based in the capital. Some local branches have been strengthened – namely in 8 municipalities (one-third of all the municipalities) centres for professional/vocational information and counselling (CIPS in Montenegrin) have been established. The CIPS provided services for schools, employed and unemployed people and parents. They organised counselling and information for a group or individuals. Career advisors from CIPS visited schools and provided students with information about further education after primary and secondary school, and labour market information. However, not all of these centres have been fully operational as some of them have struggled to provide room for their services in the past few years. As of this year, due to the new organisation of the PES and new systematisation of working positions, the CIPS have closed and do not operate any more, partly because of the lack of stable funding.

Even though the PES plays a crucial role in career guidance provision, it is facing certain limitations. Different offices face significantly different challenges. The number of unemployed per counsellor (case-load) is 10 times higher in some offices than others. Labour market conditions are considerably more favourable in the capital, Podgorica, and the coastal regions, reflecting the influence of tourism

on labour markets, which makes it more difficult for counsellors in other regions. At the same time, the PES has poor digital services and is currently being modernised.

The PES has been implementing active labour market measures (ALMPs) to stimulate self-employment, entrepreneurship and the formalisation of informal businesses, and it also offers small loans. The practice throughout the world has shown that the best results are achieved when these measures go hand-in-hand with strong CGC services provided before, during and as a follow-up to the implementation of the measure.

Currently, the project 'Active employment policies through the digitalisation of the Employment Agency of Montenegro, 2021-2022' is being conducted by the ILO, and its main objective is to deliver active employment policies for Montenegro through the digitalisation and strengthened operational capacities of the PES. A rapid assessment conducted by the ILO at the end of 2018 indicated that in order to enhance the effectiveness of the employment services and programme delivery, as well as monitoring and evaluation of active labour market measures (ALMMs), two main challenges needed to be addressed: (i) the cumbersome procedural requirements for service delivery, not fully supported by the existing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platforms; and (ii) the upgrading of PES counsellors' competencies towards more intensive interaction with clients, in the spirit of the new law on mediation in employment and insurance in the case of unemployment.

Some of the ALMMs provided by the PES include the 'Adult learning and training', 'Training for work with the employer', 'Training for independent work' and 'Stop the grey economy' programmes and other measures which were financed increasingly in the previous period. 'However, it is very difficult to assess the impact of these programmes as an appropriate monitoring mechanism is still lacking. This means, first of all, that there is no accurate data on the number of people employed after 6, 12 and 18 months of participation in the programmes, their types of jobs (i.e. full-time or part-time) and wage levels. In the near future, it would be very useful to start preparations for collecting this data.'<sup>10</sup>

The composition of participants in the active employment policy programmes implemented in 2020 is as follows: the number of female participants made up 57.18% and young people 49.39%, while the share of the long-term unemployed was 1.86%. Participants belonging to the Roma and Egyptian populations stood at 2%, while the number of persons with disabilities amounted to 6.79%. (Economic Reform Programme, 2021-23).

The NEET rate (representing the share of young people (15-24) of the total population not in employment, education or training) amounted to 21.1% in 2020 (however, other data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) state it is as much as 26.6%). A significant share of young people retain a NEET status for nearly 2 years – 20 months ('Transition of young people to labour market in Montenegro', ILO, 2016). The reduction in the NEET rate is one of the indicators defined by the Employment Strategy 2021-2025: to 17.5% in 2023 and 15% in 2025. A number of measures has been proposed in order to achieve this goal (training 500 unemployed people up to the age of 30 in deficit IT occupations, new grant schemes to improve the employment of young people up to the age of 30, with disabilities, training and employing young people for inspection, combating the grey economy, and training young people for starting a business in agriculture)<sup>11</sup>. Since participation in lifelong learning (LLL) programmes is still very low – 2.7% in 2020 – the same strategy has set targets of 5% in 2023 and 7.5% in 2025. There are also great expectations from the Youth Guarantee Programme, for which the working group has been set up.

Recognising the importance of practical knowledge, Montenegro has implemented a professional training programme for all higher education graduates since 2013. The main reason for launching this government programme was to support young people with higher education who lack work experience, and through a 9-month training programme help them acquire knowledge, skills and competences for independent work and to connect with employers with the aim of finding employment more easily. Over the 9 months of professional training, users receive compensation amounting to

<sup>10</sup> The Evaluation of Active Labour Market Policy in Montenegro, RCC ([file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Evaluacija-aktivne-politike-trzista-rada-u-Crnoj-Gori-eng%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Evaluacija-aktivne-politike-trzista-rada-u-Crnoj-Gori-eng%20(1).pdf)).

<sup>11</sup> The programme supporting the employment of young people in 2022, Government of Montenegro.

50% of the average net salary of Montenegro in the previous year. The programme is about to be reformed as many weaknesses have been spotted during the implementation.

There are also programmes that target vulnerable groups, one of which, 'Activate Women, 2021-2022', supported by the ILO, is intended to be conducted in cooperation with the local community, local PES, local education providers and local employers.

The NGO sector is very active and client-oriented insofar as CGC is concerned.

The Forum MNE, an NGO, is currently implementing 2 projects in youth employability filed based on one-stop-shop methodology, intended for the NEET youth, aged 18 to 30. Projects are implemented with financial support of European Union and the Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media.

The regional project "My career from zero to hero- Strengthening networks of Western Balkan CSOs to implement one-stop-shop youth employability model for future jobs of 4.0.digital revolution" is implemented in Montenegro by Forum MNE in cooperation with the partner organisations in: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania.

The project envisages creation of one-stop-shop model which provides all youth employability services at one place for developing skills for future jobs of 4.0 digital revolution. Model includes following services: 1. youth outreach, 2. developing digital skills through practical work and mentorship support, 3. developing soft/transferable skills, 4. developing entrepreneurial skills, 5. online educational tutorials, 6. career counselling and 7. networking. It is implemented in Podgorica and involves 50 youth within first phase and 20 within entrepreneurial skills course.

The second project of Forum MNE: "One-stop-shop service for social inclusion and youth employability" is implemented in northern region (Bijelo Polje, Berane, Rozaje). The programme involves 25 young people and consists of three courses to be held between January and November 2022: soft skills course, digital marketing course and entrepreneurship in IT.

The NGO Zid (Wall) has also been very active in career guidance and counselling. A few of their activities are described here. The project 'Get engaged', 2017, supported by the then Ministry of Sport and Youth, established an online model of CGC: <http://angazujse.info/>. Peer educators/councillors were trained and hired in the service for CGC and were operating the telephone line 'Career phone' and preparing information and texts for the website. Four NGO-Zid employees were trained to work on career information, career guidance and counselling and on the development of individual career plans. Workshops were organised for the unemployed without work experience for up to 30 years in all Montenegrin regions. A continuous campaign was aimed at drawing the attention of young people and the public to the importance of career planning in order to develop awareness and responsibility for career development among young people, to promote knowledge of labour market trends and to strengthen the capacity of young people, which will enable them to be better positioned in the labour market. Each activity was fully covered by the media. The project involved 252 direct and 30 000 indirect users. The workshops were delivered at local premises (schools or other convenient venues).

The second NGO ZID project dealt with the career counselling of young people (up to the age of 30) and the practical application of knowledge through participation in the regional innovative programme 'Socialthon' – 'Social beat!', financially supported by the Ministry of Sports and Youth in 2018, which was the continuation of the 'Get engaged project' and included 315 and 50 000 indirect users.

The third NGO ZID project, 'Career guidance and counselling for the young and unemployed', financially supported by the Ministry of Education, was implemented during the period 20 January – 31 October 2019. It dealt with designing and distributing flyers with information on career guidance and counselling, training for peer educators / counsellors (aged 16-22) and various workshops for VET secondary school students and the unemployed were conducted. The course 'Career Management Skills' which lasted 5 days was conducted in cooperation with CIPS representatives.

'Opportunities', a programme implemented with the support of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in Montenegro and financially supported by the TUI Care Foundation, aimed to enable adolescents (aged 17-19) in Montenegro to participate in practical

training, learn more about the labour market and potential career opportunities, and also successfully prepare for the transition from school to employment. It was conducted in 2021 and involved 870 direct users through various training programmes for employers and adolescents.

### 4.3 Workers / the employed

Most employees are expected to take responsibility for their own career development.

The Chamber of Economy and the Employers Federation of Montenegro provides a lot of activities, primarily educational and informative, intended for SMEs and on various topics. These two institutions are indirectly involved in the development of career guidance in Montenegro and in this regard conduct certain activities to improve career guidance. They continuously analyse data on employment and demand on the labour market, providing labour market intelligence (LMI), opportunities for additional training, retraining and education, research the needs of employees and the unemployed in terms of education, and, above all, the needs of employees of their members. In order to develop the competitiveness of the workforce, educational activities are organised. The areas of activity and selection of educational activities are selected based on the requests of members and based on market research on the needs of members. The two institutions also actively participate in the promotion and implementation of the dual education system.

Career guidance and training has not traditionally been a key priority area for trade unions. The low involvement of trade unions in career guidance could be due to a number of reasons. Pressurised to prioritise other non-learning related issues (e.g. job redundancy and job contracts) in the context of the economic crisis, trade unions may find it challenging to offer high quality career guidance support to workers. Another challenge is the lack of funding.

The PES is open to providing services to the employed who are involved in their employment programmes as well, but there are a few issues. Firstly, PES advisors may not have the specialised knowledge to provide adequate support to all groups of the employed. The bulk of the PES career guidance advisors' work has to do with the unemployed and inactive, whereas employed workers are given lower priority.

Employers are also well placed to provide career guidance to workers with regard to career development opportunities within the company itself. They can help employees to reflect on their career aims; assist them in identifying what training they need in order to advance in their careers; and provide information about agencies that can provide further guidance. Some employers, mostly in banking, ICT and the hospitality sector, contract external agencies that assess their employees' needs and deliver training, and work on staff growth and development, etc. Larger firms are generally more likely to fund career development than smaller firms. Provision in SMEs is more often informal and dependent on the goodwill of individual managers. By contrast, in larger firms, systematic approaches are more common. Strangely enough, public institutions (ministries and various agencies funded by the State) often lack human resources departments and do little regarding career guidance and counselling for their staff<sup>12</sup>.

A good practice example can be found in the world of education, namely, all teachers working in primary and secondary schools are obliged to renew their licences every 5 years. To do that, they have to accumulate a certain number of hours spent on professional development activities, which are based on their training needs. The training needs are defined by an annual or a biannual personal professional development plan, which teachers design together with their superiors or professional associates at their schools. They can also move up the career ladder as there are four ranks in the teaching profession.

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<sup>12</sup> Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2022-2026, <https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/predlog-strategije-reforme-javne-uprave-za-period-2022-2026-s-predlogom-akcionog-plana-za-period-2022-2024.pdf>

Montenegro has been struggling with the informal economy for quite a long time. The rate of informal employment is expected to decrease from 32.7% in 2020 to 26% in 2023 and 22% in 2025. Also, the percent of irregularities diagnosed during inspections is to fall from 35% in 2020 to 32% in 2023 and 28% in 2025. The programme supporting the employment of young people in Montenegro in 2022, which is to serve until the Youth Guarantee Programme has been put in place, has five measures, two of which are related to a decrease of the informal economy: training and employing young people to conduct inspections dealing with the informal economy; and a measure whereby young people support the development of agriculture.

### **Services for the self-employed**

As there is a growing number of self-employed people (freelance work, contract work and platform work), the Ministry for Economic Development has initiated changes to the Labour Law which will recognise this category of the employed. It is expected to be adopted by the end of the year. It should provide them with an opportunity to become fully self-employed persons recognised by the system since, currently, most of them are either officially unemployed, or on the payroll of a company for the sake of paying minimal pension insurance contributions without actually working for the company.

## 5. Funding

The career guidance services are free for the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment through the PES. Guidance is also free for those enrolled in education or recent graduates. Employed adults may be expected to pay for the career guidance and counselling services.

### Public funding

National data on public spending on career guidance are limited. The only reliable source of country data is PES and Euroguidance and Europass Centre expenditure, but this is only an approximation, too.

National data on public spending on career guidance by educational institutions is very limited. Educational institutions, especially primary and secondary schools, provide free career guidance for their current students or recent graduates. The costs of career guidance in education institutions tend to be grouped together with overall spending on education and training. As a result, country data that captures public spending on career guidance in educational institutions is not available.

It may be argued that this category involves teachers and professional associates' salaries, which are paid by the MESCS. However, it must be noted that these extra tasks of school psychologists/pedagogues and teachers who are members of CGC school teams are unpaid, which can and does cause a little resistance and unwillingness on their part to be fully involved in carrying out these activities.

The National Euroguidance Centre is part of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and is co-funded by the Ministry and EU funds.

The University of Montenegro and its Career Centre is also funded by the State through the University's budget.

Apart from educational institutions, most of the work relating to CGC is done by the Public Employment Service (PES). However, since career guidance is only one of many services offered by the PES, only part of the public resources spent on the PES are devoted to career guidance. The size of PES administration spending relative to total PES spending (including activities such as training, employment incentives and out-of-work income support) is not easy to calculate.

### Private participation

As for private participation, it may be argued that adults who are employed and out of school must generally contribute to the cost of career guidance from private providers. As private CGC providers are only of recent date in Montenegro, there are no accurate data or surveys on costs.

When employers provide career development opportunities for their staff, employers stand to benefit from higher employee engagement and retention, skills development and improved skill matches as employees move to where their skills are most needed within the company (Cedefop, 2008). Unfortunately, there is no national data on employers' spending on career development and guidance. Spending on career development is often grouped together with training as part of a company's 'learning and development' budget. In words of the employers and private agencies interviewed, employers sometimes provide career guidance for their employees, mostly through different kinds of training aimed at upskilling or reskilling their staff, or pay for coaching, assessment and development support for individuals in key talent groups, such as senior managers or recent graduates. They also regularly pay for employees to access advice and support relating to learning and development activities.

Despite the direct benefits to adults, available information suggests that users do not usually pay out of their own pockets for the service.

## Donor funding

There have been a number of CG activities in Montenegro that have been funded by an international education or employment project or by various NGOs and professional associations (psychologists' association etc.).

The first was a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) project on 'Designing the transition of young people to the world of work in the Western Balkans' (2008-2011), which resulted in training programmes for primary school teachers and appropriate manuals for teachers, and the development of the curriculum for the elective subject 'Professional orientation in primary school'. The second was a project on 'Modernisation of educational programmes and teacher training' carried out as part of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) IV project (2016-2017) in VET schools. This project addressed career guidance in vocational schools. The final result was a 3-day seminar for the career guidance team in vocational schools on the topic 'Career management skills in vocational schools'. The Labour Market Reform and Labour Force Development IPA project (2008-2012) was the initial project with which the career guidance programme in Montenegro fully started. The project results included the development of the first Strategy for lifelong career orientation (2011-2015) in Montenegro, a teacher training programme for secondary schools, an appropriate manual for teachers and a workbook for students in secondary schools. The project resulted in the opening of centres for professional counselling (CIPS) and better cooperation between schools and CIPS.

The issue with international projects is how to secure sustainability of the programmes and activities once the projects are over.

The role of non-governmental organisations is very important in career guidance and contributes to the overall quality of education. For example, the NGO Zid, obtained small grants from the Ministry of Education in a public call for tenders for a project on education. Zid organised many projects, activities and a campaign about career guidance entitled 'Get involved' (2017 and 2018) and 'Career guidance for young people and unemployed people' (2019).

The two previous strategies on career guidance (2011-2015 and 2016-2020) did not mention the costs needed for implementation. When they did, the funding source would be the current budget or internationally funded project (mainly IPA). The current Programme of lifelong career guidance and counselling 2021-2023 – which is on hold – does mention the costs, but it also mainly refers to the usual activities of the institutions involved, which are funded from their own budgets in any case.

To reduce overall funding costs for the government, Montenegro is planning to increasingly use a delivery model that takes advantage of technology. For those with digital skills, online career resources can enable self-help, thereby freeing up resources to provide assistance to those who most need it.

## 6. Access

Bearing in mind the wide range of potential CGC service users, such as primary, secondary and tertiary students, the unemployed, employed adults, older adults, people with disabilities, mothers with young children, women returning to work, remote communities and a range of disadvantaged groups, we come to the conclusion that the demand for career guidance exceeds the supply, and many people do not have access to it.

Until recently, career guidance has tended to focus on young people in schools, who are about to transition into higher levels of education or into the labour market. It is also delivered in a too limited range of locations (schools or PES offices), ways (face-to-face, telephone or website), times of the day or week (usually in the morning shift on working days) or points of the life cycle (continuing education or looking for a job). Little of CGC is available outside the standard opening hours of the educational institutions and government offices, so therefore, for example, the employed or mothers looking after their children find it difficult to use the services. Career guidance is not widely available in workplace settings or in sites such as leisure centres, small communities, shopping centres, public libraries, citizen advice centres, community centres or homes.

### The most common target groups and the issues relating to access to CGC services

First of all, a number of strategies, such as the Youth Strategy 2017-2021 and the survey on the Career Guidance System of Montenegro, 2019, MESCS, claim that a good majority of students attending primary and secondary schools (and their parents) and university students are not well informed about the available services. Being aware of the existence of some services is of course the first step towards using the services.

At the same time, most of the activities taking place in schools have to do more with providing information on secondary schools than CGC in its original sense. CGC in primary schools is most often provided at whole-class workshops, conducted by the class head teacher (who may not be qualified enough to practice CGC), and little supervision is conducted to check the quality of these classes. Anyway, these classes are one-size-fits-all and do not take care of individualities and the personal needs of different students. Individual counselling in schools is rare as it is highly time-consuming and requires professionals to deal with the matter.

As for secondary schools, a large amount of the activities is conducted for final-year students to help them decide which university to go to, also in the form of providing information. Little genuine CGC is offered, particularly to those who are about to enter the labour market.

The Careers Centre at the University of Montenegro is of recent date. Until recently, it had only one employee and is still in its early stage of development. It contracts a psychologist to conduct workshops and sessions that are oriented towards self-development and growth. However, they are based in the capital city of Podgorica, and therefore students from faculties outside this city cannot access these services at all times. Indeed, there is a webpage offering some information on CGC, but so far there are no specialised online portals for students.

As for the unemployed, the system has been designed in such a way that all registered users have to come to the PES office at least once in 45 days, when they then have the opportunity to use the service. Of course, they get their individual counsellor to work with them and design their individual employment plan. Otherwise, the PES follows the traditional principle of 'drop-in' services, waiting for clients to seek services. Little is done to try to reach out to the disadvantaged groups.

A much more proactive approach is taken by the NGO sector and certain associations dealing with particular – and usually vulnerable – groups, such as young people with disabilities, women, etc.

## 7. Use of Technology

Career guidance services can be provided face-to-face, by using various technologies, or in a hybrid form. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. Face-to-face services have a 'human touch' component which is appreciated by many, and no internet or telephone connection is required. On the other hand, adults living in remote areas, or where services are poor, may not have access to face-to-face services. Technologies such as telephone, videoconference, online chat and instant messaging help overcome distance barriers and reduce the public cost of traditional programmes. However, the involvement of those with low digital skills or who do not have a telephone or internet connection may pose a challenge.

Recent data by MONSTAT, the national statistics office, show that 80% of the population of Montenegro uses the internet. However, for households with monthly incomes of less than EUR 300 a month, the percentage is around 50%. The fact that an increasing number of people are using the internet on a daily basis cannot be overlooked. Therefore, some traditional ways of informing users about the services offered have also undergone certain changes, which must be taken into account when producing CGC materials. For example, primary and secondary school students do not like printed materials but prefer digital materials, which can easily be found on internet.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has brought inevitable changes to the way in which everyone provides their services, primarily by reducing or forbidding face-to-face meetings and gatherings, and switching to an online mode of delivering teaching, meetings, conferences, etc. Never has the online environment been so important in our lives. We can also say that the COVID-19 crisis has rendered CGC at schools and PES as being of less importance and placed the focus on online teaching and assessing. Schools have concentrated on delivering online teaching, and the PES offices have switched to telephone and email communication. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 crisis has also brought some good. Far more people are using technologies today than before the pandemic in all areas: education, health, employment, banking, etc.

Basically, using technology in the field of CGC requires the necessary infrastructure, which can still be a challenge in low-income countries such as Montenegro. Schools and even public institutions of crucial importance are still struggling to provide equipment and other preconditions such as Wi-Fi internet, cameras or microphones, which are needed for the successful use of technology in their regular activities. The Public Employment Service is also in the process of modernising its digital capacities and services, as they are rather out of date.

The most common way of using technology for CGC services on the part of users remains looking for information on the internet about vacancies, the provision of training programmes, information about secondary schools and universities, and, generally, information about education and employment.

The providers are mostly focusing on providing information about the services they offer, such as advertising vacancies or the educational/training programmes they offer.

What is also evident is that social networks are being used more and more and are the most common platforms for informing users on services, upcoming events, training courses, workshops, etc.

What is striking, however, is the fact that a lot of school and university students are still complaining that they are poorly informed about CGC services at schools and universities (Youth Strategy 2017-2021, *Young people claim that they are not adequately informed about the services and measures provided in the field of employment and employability. Furthermore, the quality/efficiency of the existing services and measures is questionable.*).

However, there is some progress with regard to the use of technologies. In 2021, Montenegro introduced the electronic enrolment in secondary schools and universities. Each institution and most schools have their own website and use them as a platform for delivering information. They are not all of the desired quality, but things are getting better. This fragmentation of information also means that looking for some information may take a lot of time and require a certain set of skills, which not

everyone has. There is also the issue of maintenance of websites that are specifically designed for certain purposes, especially those created during a project cycle, such as obrazovanjeiprivreda.me – a portal intended to connect VET schools and employers and provide information about work-based learning). This website has not been updated lately.

There are no online career guidance portals providing web-based sources of centralised information on jobs and/or training opportunities in a certain region or municipality. These portals could also offer personalised recommendations based on user inputs and be used by individuals to support self-directed career and training exploration.

However, there is a growing number of private employment agencies (for example karijera.me, zaposli.me, prekoveze.me, careerjet.me, mojposao.me, etc.) which do advertise on internet and also offer some CGC activities for their users, such as writing CVs and motivational letters, etc.

The University of Montenegro, supported by a bank in Montenegro, is developing an online platform. The platform 'Jobiri' will have the profiles of students who register and employers which cooperate with the university, and is supposed to help young people with their first steps when looking for a job. It will also contain 145 short video tutorials to help students find a job.

The ILO is supporting the design of a portal which will contain all the necessary information on occupations in Montenegro. The focus is first on the occupations in demand, and later new occupations will be added, with a description of the occupation, salaries, vacancies, etc. (similar to that designed in North Macedonia – <https://zanimanja.mk/>).

The ILO is also supporting the improvement of the digital services of the PES. The specific objectives of the ILO project are: (i) to improve the efficiency of the PES in the delivery of inclusive and people-centred services to clients; and (ii) to put in place the pre-conditions for the implementation of the ICT reform of the PES's service delivery.

A Single Information System for electronic data exchange (SISEDE) has recently been put in place. Its basic function is to enable communication among the existing systems and faster exchange of information between citizens and officials, enabling the electronic provision of services and the automated exchange and use of large amounts of data stored in the state registers. This will in turn help obtain a lot of data about the labour market, students' destinations after graduation and other data that could be well used for CGC.

The PES, in cooperation with TV Vijesti, produces a television series entitled 'Putokazi' (Road signs), which is broadcast once a week and informs the public on active job hunting, ways of starting one's own business, and mainly provides information about services provided by the PES, with the focus on Active Labour Market Measures.

## 8. Quality of provision of career development support services within a culture of continuous improvement

This section examines aspects which contribute towards increasing and maintaining the quality of provision, including the definition of standards of service and ethical treatment of personal information, professionalisation and training of practitioners and other staff, quality of tools, methodologies and information.

### 8.1 Standards

Standards for the quality of services do not exist or are present in some sectors, but not in others. Where quality standards exist, they tend to be voluntary, rather than mandatory. Inspection of services against these quality standards is the exception rather than the rule.

There are quality standards relating to CGC in Montenegro for services delivered by the PES in the form of rulebooks and internal procedures on how certain activities are to be conducted (a number of rulebooks describing various procedures, such as the Rulebook on active jobseeking, the Rulebook on standards for conducting professional rehabilitation measures and activities, etc.).

There are also standards regarding CGC provision in primary and secondary schools when external school evaluations are conducted. One area of evaluation is entitled 'Support provided to students' and one indicator is devoted to conducting career guidance and counselling at school level. These evaluations are followed by a quality report, which also contains recommendations on how to improve certain areas of work. What is missing, however, is the clear description of what high-quality CGC at schools actually is.

CGC provision at schools is mostly governed by different manuals and handbooks.

Primary schools use the manual 'Professional orientation – five steps towards making a decision on a school or occupation – programme for primary schools', 2008, GIZ. It contains numerous lesson plans to be conducted with students in workshops. VET schools use the manual 'Career guidance and counselling in VET schools – manual for VET school teachers', 2017, MESCS. There is also a manual on 'Career Guidance and Counselling for SEN students', 2018. There are separate tests (designed by the Association of Psychologists) to be used in the first three cycles of primary school and one for secondary school students for the (self-) assessment of preferences, interests and abilities/talents. They are available in both electronic and paper form, and are to be used by school career practitioners, students and their parents. There are also tests for SEN students – 'The road to my interests – instruments for the assessment of children with SEN during professional orientation' by the Association of Psychologists of Montenegro.

'Using social networks in career guidance', 2018, by Mileva Lucic, MESCS, is another guide which provides information on how social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) can be used for career guidance and counselling.

There are also online resources from the neighbouring countries (in which a very similar language is spoken) for practitioners for mutual learning and sharing good practices online in the form of various manuals on CGC and video clips.

There are no standards or controls in private sector provision of career guidance services. Where guidance services are subcontracted by the public sector to the private or voluntary sectors, the standards of service and the outcomes for users are generally not specified.

Much of the quantitative information that is available about career guidance provision has limited usefulness for evaluating processes and service quality. Career guidance policies are insufficiently

guided by user feedback and by relevant evidence and data, including such basic information as the levels of usage and types of services accessed.

## 8.2 Staffing

In the absence of quality frameworks, there is an over-reliance on staff qualifications or professional codes of practice to assure quality. Frequently, these cover some forms of provision, but not others.

The profession of 'career guidance advisor' is not a regulated profession in Montenegro. Requirements vary by context, but a tertiary degree is usually required (schoolteachers and university advisors). In addition to a tertiary degree, some training is preferable, but not mandatory, and certain work experience (for university advisors). Advisors working in public employment services have the same requirements, and additionally they must have a degree in psychology. Their continuous professional development activities are conducted mainly through international projects providing support to the PES in updating and modernising its services. Through the 'Decent Work Country Programme 2019-2021', implemented by the ILO, career counsellors of 10 PES agencies were trained for the application of the ILO career-guidance toolkit.

At the PES, a tertiary degree is a minimum requirement for most adult career guidance programmes: a second-cycle programme at a university or other higher education institution is required (psychology) and 2 years of work experience. For those working in employment mediation, a tertiary degree mainly in social sciences is required, whereas a career advisor must be a psychologist.

As CGC advisors or practitioners are of crucial importance for the quality of the services provided, an increasing number of countries are using competency frameworks to design training and qualifications. Montenegro has not designed such a framework yet. Apart from the PES psychologists, the only initial or continuing training for careers practitioners and educators are the training programmes offered to primary and secondary teachers. This 5-day training course does not lead to a professional qualification.

The staff working in primary and secondary schools, in the 'CG teams', are usually school psychologists/pedagogues and teachers of various subjects. The idea is to have all the members of teams trained in CGC, in line with numerous training programmes offered in national catalogues for teachers' professional development. The training programmes for CGC (seven programmes in the 2020/2021 catalogue) were designed mostly through different international projects and mainly cover the following topics: 1. Self-awareness and self-development; 2. Exploring careers; and 3. Career management and decision-making. This particular programme is intended for all secondary schools and lasts 5-7 days. However, training school teams is not systematic and is often dependent on various international projects. So far, around half of primary school teams have been trained in CG activities.

Another issue is that the rules enabling schools to hire a psychologist are rather strict. It usually goes hand-in-hand with school pedagogues and states that schools with more than 450 students are allowed to have one professional associate (either a pedagogue which is more common, or a psychologist). Only schools with over 1 000 students can hire both categories. In Montenegro, a pedagogue usually deals with all the issues relating to teaching and learning and provide support to both students and teachers. A psychologist usually treats psychological problems relating to learning, school or family that a student might have, and offers counselling.

The issue with this concept is that there are so many schools, especially small schools in remote areas which cannot hire a psychologist.

The University of Montenegro has also prescribed a tertiary degree as a precondition for its practitioners, but no additional qualification.

The NGO sector is much more flexible regarding the qualifications of practitioners conducting CG activities. They are usually carried out by youth workers or specialists dealing with informal education.

Youth workers are often required to complete in-service training or training by experienced CG advisors.

A very good idea being implemented by the NGO Psychologists' Association of Montenegro has recently been taken on board, namely the training of novice psychologists, who currently lack experience, to deliver training courses for school students who will later act as peer trainers for their schoolmates. The training programmes for both psychologists and students have been designed, and the activity is about to be implemented.

Bearing in mind that more and more activities are moving to the internet and use of modern technologies, it is believed that the careers practitioners are not appropriately trained in the use of digital and distance methodologies and tools.

### 8.3 Quality of data and information

With regard to the quality of data and information on CGC, it is clear that there is a lot of room for improvement, namely a large amount of information is related to the choice of secondary schools or faculties that are available.

Therefore, every year, the PES publishes an 'Information Book' on enrolment in secondary schools, whereas universities publish the 'Information Book' on enrolment in tertiary studies. These books usually provide information about programmes that schools/faculties offer, the number of places available per programme, the way in which the students' points are calculated, etc. There are also websites of schools (of different quality) or faculties providing the same information. However, this information is not backed up by tracer studies, the description of various occupations or labour market intelligence (LMI) regarding the demand for the occupations, etc. We might argue that these are informative-marketing books, merely describing the educational provision.

There have been attempts by the Ministry of Education and the National VET agency to conduct comprehensive tracer studies, but they mainly resulted in low response rates on the part of their former students and did not have valid results. The National VET Agency published its survey on VET students' destinations after graduation, which could be used for this purpose<sup>13</sup>, and Montenegro is currently designing the system for tracking students after graduation.

Another issue is that enrolment policies for both secondary schools and universities are too often supply-driven rather than demand-driven, and are generally said to be not in line with labour market needs. Therefore, the question is still: how do students choose when they are faced with making decisions on which secondary school / faculty to enrol in, or which job to look for? The general impression is that they make uninformed decisions about their careers, often influenced by their parents or peers.

Labour market intelligence (LMI) is systematically collected and disseminated in Montenegro by institutions such as the PES, MONSTAT, employers' organisations, etc. within the scope of their work, although the type of information and the approaches and tools used to collect and disseminate this information vary.

The **Public Employment Service** conducts annually the *Analysis of supply, demand and employment in the labour market in Montenegro*. This publication provides a lot of information and an insight into trends in the labour market for the previous year and can be used as a good tool for decision-making policies. However, it could be a bit more user-friendly and tailored to the needs of different target groups. The MESCS is to use the analysis when designing their school/university enrolment plans.

There are also other surveys and studies the PES performs in relation to the labour market analysis, such as surveys on deficit occupations in Montenegro, an analysis of unemployment (general or for specific cohorts), surveys on foreign workers in Montenegro and information on active labour market measures (ALMMs), etc.

<sup>13</sup> Praćenje učenika stručnih škola nakon završetka školovanja za školsku 2019/2020. Godinu, CSO, 2020.

**MONSTAT** (the national statistics office) conducts *Labour Force Surveys* four times a year. The *Labour Force Survey* collects information on the economically active population or labour force, as recommended by the ILO (International Labour Organization). The labour force includes all persons working or seeking work in order to earn their living. Therefore, the main categories are total employment, unemployment, and the demographic, educational, socioeconomic and other characteristics of individuals that are in each of the individual groups.

The **Chamber of Economy** also conducts its own surveys and studies involving employers in order to gain a better picture of what is going on in the labour market.

The **Employers Federation** also analyses the labour market in order to better understand its clients' need.

Various surveys, studies and research on the labour market situation in Montenegro have also been conducted by various international projects, foundations and multiple institutions in the past. So we can argue that there is a lot of information on the labour market in Montenegro, but there are other issues to be dealt with.

**Firstly**, as this information often requires specialist knowledge and is easily understood by only a small number of people, it is not easy to find and use by different groups of those in need of CGC.

**Secondly**, there is no information on the labour market tailored to different users: primary school students, secondary school students, university students, the unemployed, etc.

**Thirdly**, the format of this information often does not suit the clients' needs. It is often printed and contains much more information than a potential reader might need. Information books about enrolment in secondary schools or universities contain brief information about each school or faculty in the country.

Skills forecasts, both general and sectoral, are lacking. Currently, the ILO is helping the Ministry of Economic Development and the PES with the project 'Occupational Outlook'. The joint working group has been set up consisting of all the stakeholders, and they are designing an overview of occupations. To start with, they will describe in detail 10 occupations that are in demand. When all is said and done, it will be an online portal with all the information about all the occupations, their descriptions, how to acquire them, and a lot of other useful information.

Having said this, we might conclude that, as career practitioners at schools / universities / other institutions do not know the labour market situation very well, they tend to focus more on psychological insight into oneself, or different techniques to helping people applying for a job (how to write a CV or motivational letter, how to prepare for an interview, how to present oneself, etc.).

## 8.4 Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

In Montenegro, there are so many strategies laying down guidelines for various sectors and areas, and they are always accompanied by action plans for usually 2 years. At the end of the 2-year period, it is obligatory to draft a report on the activities implemented in the reporting period and submit it to the government.

The report on the activities implemented from the Action Plan of the National Lifelong CG Strategy in 2017 and 2018 describes all the activities that took place in the period defined, with the numbers of participants, workshops, etc. However, it is clear that a number of activities did not take place as there are gaps in the table. The level of the activities implemented is taken into account when drafting the action plan for the following 2 years. The final report on the activities implemented from the Action Plan of the National Lifelong CG Strategy from 2016 to 2020 states that 90% of the planned activities have been achieved. At the same time, the conclusion contains a very long list of recommendations for the future.

Public Employment Service annual reports provide data on CG activities conducted in the previous year. They contain all the data on the number of clients who have had individual or group information

or counselling sessions, the number of individual employment plans drafted, and the number of contacts the counsellors had with their clients, etc. However, the impact of all these activities has not been assessed.

Career guidance is evaluated by an external school evaluation process. In Montenegro, the Bureau for Educational Services (BES) and the National VET Agency conduct regular evaluation of education institutions, from pre-school to adult education, and one of their focus areas is support provided to students, with one of the indicators being career guidance. These two institutions advise schools about what they would need to change in order to improve CG provision. They also design annual reports on education quality, and here is one excerpt from the BES Report on Education Quality 2020:

*Some schools provided career guidance for their students. The students were informed on the opportunities for studying in Montenegro and abroad, scholarships and webinars were delivered as well – online support to students applying for scholarships. Students with special education needs were informed on the opportunities for further schooling.'*

School self-evaluations, which are compulsory by law, conducted by school teams and using the same quality framework as external evaluation, are another means for monitoring the outcomes of career guidance services at the provider level. It is not known whether schools assess the quality of the CG service they provide within their self-evaluation process (an in-depth analysis would be needed to investigate this).

As the new methodology for school evaluation has been recently designed but not adopted yet, it is still unclear whether career guidance will be monitored during external/internal school evaluations. The draft methodology proposed monitoring CGC in VET schools, which would exclude it from primary and secondary general schools, and does not make much sense. As there are no clear quality standards regarding career guidance in the education system, the amount of monitoring and evaluation of CGC activities in schools varies across the country.

As for primary and secondary schools, career guidance is generally provided by the head class teachers at special classes for various topics. Each school plans the amount and time of delivering such classes. Other forms of provision are through individual/group counselling carried out by professional associates (pedagogues/psychologists), extra-curricular or cross-curricular activities and as stand-alone elective subject.

The survey on the CGC system in Montenegro, the MESCS, 2019, found that schools do not seem to care too much about recording CG activities. Less than a third of the teachers surveyed (who were members of the school CGC team) say that records are kept in some form, whereas nearly 70% say that records on CGC activities are not kept, or they have no knowledge of it. The same survey indicated that school annual plans for CGC activities mainly do not contain the evaluation of achieved effects (45% of the surveyed CGC team members), whereas less than a third of them state that they contain the evaluation. Only 14% of those surveyed say that the plans were fully implemented, one third say that around 60% of the plans have been achieved. Less than half of those surveyed say they cannot assess how much has been implemented.

As the annual plan of professional orientation is included in the Annual School Work Plan, and schools are supposed to report on the activities in the previous year, there should be some information about it.

The same holds true for secondary schools, and there are reports from some schools on CG activities performed during the previous year. Unfortunately, it seems that CG services in schools are more supply than demand-driven. There is no assessment of the service needs by diverse client groups or the level of coverage of the existing services. This process is best done with SEN (special educational needs) students. For children with special educational needs, a pattern for an Individual Transition Plan (ITP-1, ITP-2, ITP-3) has been designed, which refers to career orientation, guidance and transition, hence including career guidance. There are expert teams formed for each individual student advising the student about educational/labour market choices.

As there are no initiatives to measure the social or economic impact of career development support activities directly, there have been a few initiatives to measure something that is common to career guidance. There are two surveys measuring the impact of active labour market measures (the first conducted by Regional Cooperation Council, 2021) and the second by the ILO (to be published soon). It is clear that these measures could be improved by adding CGC more actively in the process. Employment outcomes are a common way to assess the effectiveness of career guidance services or re-employment programmes that include career guidance services as a component.

There was also a study on the transition of young people from education to work conducted by the ILO in 2016. It demonstrated that the transition for young people from education to work lasts nearly 2 years, which clearly proves the need for CGC for this category.

There are not many research activities investigating the state of play with CGC in Montenegro. The latest is the Career Guidance and Counselling System of Montenegro, 2019, MoE, Euroguidance Centre, European Commission, entitled 'Study on improvement, recommendations and good practice examples in CGC'. The analysis and assessment of the CGC system in the education sector was the survey conducted in primary and secondary schools in 2019.

The Euroguidance Centre participated in two international surveys regarding CGC system development: career guidance and counselling during the pandemic and the study on the performance of Euroguidance Centres.

It seems that each institution performs its CG activities independently of other partners, and that is why the monitoring and evaluation is merely a list of the activities that have been planned in the reporting period. Monitoring of career guidance may be carried out for a number of purposes: to help providers evaluate and improve their performance; to hold the system to account; and to measure the economic and social value of activities relative to their cost.

The quality of career guidance is generally measured by looking at employment, wages, training participation, unemployment benefit receipt and user satisfaction. Outcomes can be measured using a variety of monitoring and evaluation methods, implemented either by external quality assurance bodies, research groups and academics, or internally by self-evaluations. Training participation after being provided with CGC services is another commonly measured outcome. Asking users about their satisfaction with the service is another way to assess quality. Often a combination of outcomes are measured.

## 9. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

### Main findings

The career guidance and counselling system has been present in Montenegro for a long time (stemming from the ex-Yugoslavia system). The focus of the system was on the unemployed, and, as of relatively recently, students in schools. However, it still has to do more with providing information to clients rather than genuine career guidance and counselling. Given the unfavourable situation of the labour market in Montenegro and the fact that labour market needs are often not met by the current education system, CGC needs to be further developed and thus help individuals make well-informed decisions about their education and career. Of course, this can be achieved only if there is an excellent level of cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders involved.

Indeed, the best possible way is to support individuals' learning from an early age about themselves, careers, the labour market, and thus genuinely guide and advise them throughout their schooling, and continue doing so once they are adults and have started their professional lives. As we are living in a fast-changing environment, we must keep up the pace with times and use all the wealth of technology in innovative ways in order to make CGC provision available for everyone. The CGC services have to be up-to-date, modernised and tailored to the individual needs of the clients.

Montenegro has established the legal framework and strategic directions concerning career guidance and counselling to some extent. However, there seems to be a lack of a nationally shared vision of what the CGC system should look like. CGC is not present in all the laws and strategies relating to education, employment, young people, entrepreneurship, gender issue, etc. Quality standards relating to CGC exist in certain areas, but there is a lot of room for improvement.

As there are many stakeholders involved in the career guidance and counselling provision, a proper level of coordination and cooperation is needed for the successful operation of the system, which is currently not clearly visible. The CGC offer seems to be fragmented within the scope of an institution's everyday activities without clear horizontal or vertical communication. However, there are good opportunities for creating strong partnerships at state, regional and local level by involving all stakeholders.

CGC services are, to a large extent, offered to students in formal education and the registered unemployed at the PES, but the quality of this provision needs to be at a higher level. Formal education does not provide CGC in a systematic manner and usually provides basic information about further schooling paths. The PES mostly offers CGC in a traditional manner and needs to modernise its services. Other large cohorts, such as the employed, NEETs and other vulnerable groups are rarely offered CGC services.

CGC provision is usually funded from the state budget, but funds have not been specifically allocated for the purpose of CGC, but rather for the routine performances of the institution in question. Public institutions sometimes provide small grants to (usually) NGOs or professional associations to carry out some projects that involve CGC. The international organisations also participate in funding CGC provision. Employers' participation in funding CGC is very limited.

Access to CGC services is formally granted to students in the formal education sector and the registered unemployed, with all the limitations that are present related to the understaffing, lack of space, time and number of qualified professionals at schools/universities and PES offices. Other cohorts do not find it easy to get these services. In addition, the general public is said not to be properly informed about all the opportunities of CGC provision.

The most common way of providing CGC services is the traditional, face-to-face method in individual or group settings, which has its advantages. Lately, we have seen an increase in the use of technology in providing these services. However, the infrastructure issues of both public institutions and citizens and, often, the low level of digital literacy of those who are in need, do not allow for the full potential of technology to be used.

The profession of career practitioner has not been given proper attention so far as it is not regulated by law. The standards for CGC, relating to both providers and practitioners, are scarce and need to be put in place. There are programmes for the initial training of school practitioners (that need to be updated), but there are no programmes for continuous professional development of career practitioners. LMI also needs to be updated, modernised and presented in a user-friendly manner.

### Three key priorities

Based on the findings from the review, these could be the key priorities for Montenegro:

1. Strengthening the CGC process in primary and secondary schools by offering a systematic provision of this support to students and training school leaders and school teams. The training would include interpretation of LMI, using technologies for CGC, involving parents, leading group and individual CGC activities, motivating students to take part in CGC, close cooperation with employers and employers' associations etc.
2. Strengthening coordination and cooperation at State level by clear division of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved in the process. Explicit nomination of a formal entity for strategic leadership or a cross-ministerial working group or national lifelong guidance forum is required. Boosting the exchange of data among institutions and thus using statistics and LMI in career guidance and counselling will improve the overall process.

In addition to the state-level coordination and cooperation, similar local partnerships with other stakeholders should be established, with secondary schools (especially VET schools) being leaders of the process. VET schools are to be municipal learning organisations (this should also improve adult education provision), and employers, the PES office, local authorities, local NGOs, youth clubs, social workers, universities and primary schools are to be involved in the partnership. As there are already local partnerships in 21 municipalities, this needs to be capitalised on in relation to a better CGC system.

3. Improve career guidance and counselling for vulnerable groups, including young people not in employment, education or training by designing ways to reach those who are difficult to reach and vulnerable groups (women, people with disabilities, NEETs, people living in remote areas, the Roma population, etc.). More assistance needs to be provided to those who really need it, as these groups are in the most difficult situation. Innovative solutions need to be in place in order to first identify these people and then approach them with the CGC services. In doing so, NGOs should be counted on and used to reach those in need. Specific methodologies and tools to meet the needs of diverse users need to be developed.

As we are living in a technologically advanced era, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) for career guidance and counselling should be a cross-cutting issue in all three priority areas.

### DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations do not represent final solutions but are aimed at guiding policy and practice discussions. They follow the key pillars of this report and are aimed at system, provider and practitioner level:

#### Policy framework

Short-term

- Design and adopt quality standards relating to practitioners' qualifications in education, training and employment, norms that have to be met by the provider and the quality of services offered. Include all the relevant stakeholders which might contribute to the better implementation of the activities (the public sector, NGOs, trade unions, employers and employers' associations, youth organisations, etc.)

Medium to long-term

- Review the legislative frameworks for education, training and employment against the standards, ensuring that they specifically address career guidance, particularly from the perspective of the citizen, in a lifelong learning context. Career guidance and counselling in the education and employment sectors need to be redesigned in a more structured and inclusive manner. Current practices and procedures need to be reviewed and enhanced.
- Expand availability of career guidance services by adopting legislation that allows for setting up private career guidance providers, while ensuring that providers have the capacity (i.e. advisor time, training and funds) to meet the specialised needs of distinct groups (the unemployed, employed and inactive) and that they adhere to quality standards (accreditation etc.).

### Coordination and cooperation

Short-term

- Extend the cooperation between education institutions and the Chamber of Economy and the Employers Federation of Montenegro for dual education to cooperation for career guidance and career education.
- Stimulate development of local partnerships dealing with education and employment in order to create synergies at local level (include employers, local PES offices, education providers, NGOs, youth clubs, various associations, volunteers, etc.). Local implementation allows career guidance providers to adapt services to local labour market conditions and to take advantage of local networks of employers, training providers and other service providers. Develop a blueprint for the cooperation of many schools, especially in remote areas, e.g. to hire together a psychologist as a CG practitioner, building joint CG teams across schools; define precisely the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the process.

Medium to long-term

- Set up a national forum for guidance policy and systems development, including both government stakeholder representatives and key partners in service provision, in order to help focus and develop agendas and to steer policy-making. Use this to develop common government policy objectives for guidance and greater coherence, greater efficiency, and the sharing of responsibilities in guidance provision.
- Build the notion of an integrated, lifelong and comprehensive career guidance service into the lifelong learning policies that are being developed.

### Services

Short-term

- Develop career education and career guidance in the education system from early primary onwards as a mandatory element of curricula that also include practical work experience schemes to support the first and lifelong transitions from education to work, unemployment to employment, etc.
  - Ensure a wholeschool approach to career guidance, meaning that those responsible for career guidance work closely with all teachers on developing career learning in their subjects and on creating a school culture that supports career learning across subjects with an easily accessible public space for career guidance and resources, including with the space for individual, parent and group counselling; the annual school guidance plan and CG teams in primary and secondary schools build the ideal basis for this;
  - Focus on the development of career management skills from grade 1 of primary education onwards next to the traditional provision of information about occupations and further learning options at transition points;

- Move from marketing for new students to enrol towards neutral career guidance based on LMI, tracer studies, skills forecasts, etc.
- Develop special services for vulnerable groups, especially for NEETs and women, in particular if residing in rural areas.
- Develop special services for workers in the informal sector to support their incremental move towards formality.
- Cooperate with strategic partners such as NGOs with a strong track record of outreach to vulnerable groups, and social and youth workers, to allow for access to career guidance.
- Use youth clubs established at municipality level to provide CGC services, together with other related services.

#### Medium to long-term

- Provide special services to workers in non-standard forms of employment; learn from practices such as those of the civil society organisation.
- Develop a strategy for widening the PES service to anyone considering the use of ICT for career guidance.
- Transform local secondary schools into local learning centres with a wide choice of training programmes (short and medium-term), which are in demand. Make them local focal points for education and employment and consider having the local CGC centre at these schools.

### Funding

#### Short-term

- Ensure adequate public funding for career guidance systems in line with the social benefits that are generated. Target subsidies at groups that are under-represented in the labour market and in training participation (the low-skilled, older jobseekers, women, etc.).
- Consider, where appropriate, cost-effective ways to complement face-to-face personal career guidance, including curriculum provision, group guidance, self-help services and ICT-based services. Fund high-quality portals in order to free time and staff for those in most need.
- Maintain sustainable funding for NGOs, which are very active in outreach to the most vulnerable for career guidance provision; fund mobile teams tasked with reaching those who are difficult to reach.
- Ensure that the budget for career education and career guidance in education, employment and young people is clearly earmarked and visible as a basis for monitoring and evaluating inputs against outputs and outcomes.
- Ensure clear costing for actions under the 'Programme of lifelong career guidance and counselling 2021 – 2023'.

#### Medium to long-term

- Ensure funding of outreach activities to vulnerable groups, in particular NEETs.
- Encourage employers to invest in guidance provision to address the career development needs of their employees, on the grounds that this contributes to the employers' competitiveness through the continued development of workers' skills, motivation and productivity.

### Access

#### Short-term

- Design an early warning systems that might signal to those at risk of being NEETs while still at school, and provide them with support, including career guidance.

- Consider including NEETs into dual education schemes within 2 years of graduation (the selection process should be aided by career guidance and counselling). Using LMI, advertise the occupations in demand and provide a combination of theoretical and practical training for these occupations locally or regionally at regular intervals.
- Raise awareness about the availability and usefulness of career guidance services. Media campaigns can be organised, or registers of career guidance providers that include information on their costs, location and communication channels (e.g. face-to-face, telephone or online) can be developed.
- Deliver career guidance through a range of communication channels. Remote delivery (via telephone, videoconference, text messages and online services) allows providers to meet demand for career guidance services at a reduced cost and may improve access for adults living in rural areas. But remote delivery should not replace traditional face-to-face delivery. Doing so would deny access to adults with poor digital skills or those who do not have a telephone or internet connection.
- Reach out to disadvantaged groups, including older jobseekers and the low-skilled. These groups face difficulties finding good quality jobs, are under-represented in training participation and could benefit from career guidance services.
- Provide for the structured profiling of clients to assess their needs to provide appropriate services. This helps in moving away from the expensive and time-consuming model of face-to-face interviewing for all, which is still widely used in career guidance as a standard form, to a needs-based approach that allows for a diversity of delivery methods, which also increases access to services for greater numbers of clients. These methods include self-service approaches online, peer learning in client chats and call centres. Many might be helped through self-services, while it becomes clear who needs personal counselling.
- Promote the use of telephone help lines and email-based services for career guidance to overcome geographical disadvantages and allow access outside standard office hours.

#### Medium to long-term

- Develop local partnerships between education providers, the PES office, employers, municipalities, youth clubs, NGOs and social workers to tackle the issue of NEETs and other vulnerable groups.
- Develop innovative ways of mixing online and offline services to ensure a customised delivery that meets the distinctive needs of clients.
- Develop quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the extension of career guidance services and products takes place within a quality assurance framework.
- Accompany public provision of career guidance services with a private, enterprise-based and community-based provision.

#### Use of technology

##### Short-term

- Use the modernisation of the digital capacities and services of the PES to establish a single entry point to career guidance online for various target groups (students, teachers, CG practitioners, parents, employers, workers, etc.); already foresee in the medium to long term the integration of donor project outputs such as the ILO supported occupations portal, the Single Information System for data exchange among state registers, the ILO supported skills forecast platform, etc. and other digital and online sources.
- Increase the use of all kinds of technology so that clients' needs are met and the mere process is more efficient and effective. Allow users to exploit telephone, email, and Skype or Zoom meetings when communicating to practitioners. Use digital media and applications appropriate for different

target groups: primary school children, secondary school students, university students, the unemployed and employed, people with disabilities, etc. Some online portals provide ways to communicate digitally in real time with a career guidance advisor. This feature allows users to ask questions, express doubts and receive assistance in interpreting labour market information.

Medium to long-term

- Develop, adapt and adopt ICT-based career guidance programmes, and make them readily available via the internet and a CD-ROM.
- Consider the use of artificial intelligence when designing interactive technological tools.
- Establish or strengthen existing online career guidance portals. Online career guidance portals need to be user-friendly and gather information from different sources in one place. They should include information on labour market / skill needs, education and training programmes, quality of training providers, as well as training costs and financial incentives available (e.g. subsidies and tax exemptions).

### Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement:

Short-term

- Introduce standards for the qualification of career guidance practitioners and career education programmes in formal education from primary to higher education and VET. Consider to develop career guidance advisor competency frameworks to standardise training and qualifications, and to provide a means of skills evaluation.
- Create national training (including continuous professional development) and qualifications pathways to enable career guidance practitioners to progress from non-expert to expert roles. Develop high-quality training programmes that combine classroom-based learning with practical skills development and on-the-job experience. Make sure the practitioners keep updating their skills and knowledge needed to offer high-quality guidance services, making continuing professional development an essential element of quality service delivery.

Medium to long-term

- Develop a concept for school CG teams to conduct tracer studies to inform career guidance for future potential students, current students and graduates.
- Integrate LMI provided by PES and others, and tailor to the needs of different target groups and make it more user-friendly, consider integrating it into ICT based services.
- Provide information on flexible pathways from one occupation to another, based on an analysis of skills gaps.
- Train practitioners in the most up-to-date LMI available, promoting the development of skills in high-demand, and using technology.
- Extend reporting on strategies and PES work from reporting about implemented activities towards assessing inputs against outputs and outcomes.
- Ensure that the new methodology for school evaluation includes career guidance. Ensure that the inspection team conducting school evaluation includes people who understand, and have competence in, career guidance. Develop specific criteria to be used for the inspection of career guidance based on standards, and either publish separate reports or have a substantial sub-section dedicated to career guidance in the overall report.
- Ensure outsourced services to private providers adhere to quality standards (e.g. through accreditation etc.).

## ACRONYMS

ALMMs	Active labour market measures
BES	The Bureau for Educational Services
CGC	Career guidance and counselling
CIPS	Centre for providing information and professional counselling
CoE	Chamber of Economy
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
LMI	Labour market intelligence
LLL	Lifelong learning
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
MONSTAT	Montenegrin Statistical Office
NEETS	Young people (15-24) not in employment, education or training
PES	Public Employment Service
SEN	Special education needs
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UoM	University of Montenegro
VET	Vocational education and training

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