

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW – NORTH MACEDONIA

March 2022

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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 new risks.

Amidst these developments with uncertain outcomes, some things are for sure: 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. And, secondly, there is a growing demand for valid information on the changing labour markets and future prospects. This goes along with a growing need for supporting people to manage 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, and in particular career education, and career development support for workers – itself faces challenges in adapting to the new circumstances.

Against this background, the ETF reviewed 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 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, like 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 process 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 views from Ministries of education, labour and youth, social partner representatives, youth organisations, practitioners, employer organisations, sector representatives, 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 priority areas identified; and (f) last revision of the report that is being published in both English and the national language.

1.1 Context

According to preliminary data from the 2021 census, North Macedonia has an estimated population of 1.8 million, a decline of 10% since the last census in 2002. Around 60% of the population lives in urban areas.¹ The average life expectancy at birth is 75.8 years. The two major ethnic groups in the country are Macedonians and Albanians who make up at 64% and 25% of the population respectively.

Until a decade ago North Macedonia was notorious for its high rates of unemployment which were among the highest in Europe. Unemployment in the country has marked a downward trend since. The general rate of unemployment stood at 36% back in 2005. From there it has marked a steady decline to

¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/MK>

16.9% in 2019, and according to last Labour Force Survey (LFS) from before the onset of the pandemic, it stood at historically low 16.2% in the 1st quarter of 2020. It declined further to 15.2% in the last quarter of 2021, according to the most recently available data.² The total number of employed persons was around 570 000 in 2006.³ In 2019, there were a total of 797 651 employed persons in North Macedonia. In the first quarter of 2020, the total number of employed persons was 811 106, out of a total labour force of 967 733 persons.⁴ This number then declined to 795 276 in the last quarter of 2021.⁵

The country's economy has had stable yet slow growth over the past decade. GDP growth in 2019 was 3.6% compared to 2.7% in 2018⁶. The year-on-year GDP growth in the 2nd quarter of 2020, just before the onset of the pandemic, was 3.1%⁷. Based on the standard of 5.5 USD/per day, the poverty rate was estimated to have fallen to 16.9% in 2019 (2011 PPP) marking a steady decline since 2009. This drop is considered to result from the rise of income. Income has grown for the bottom 40% of the population by 7 per cent since 2012.⁸

Income inequality has also decreased in the same period, mostly due to the government policy of raising the minimum wage. As indicated by the government's Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP) 2022⁹, of the total number of employed persons in 2014, 33% had a net monthly salary below MKD 12 000 (EUR 195); in 2018, this figure declined to 2.4% of all employed. The rise of the minimum wage also increased the average net salary in the country. In 2014, it was around MKD 21 500 (EUR 350); in 2019, it reached close to MKD 24 500 (EUR 398).¹⁰ The effect of the rise of the minimum wage was felt most in the lowest paid sectors, including textiles, shoemaking, and leather processing. At the time of writing this report, the government had reaffirmed its pledges for additional increases of the minimum wage.¹¹

The past decade has marked profound changes in the labour market in North Macedonia, primarily on account of strong outward migration. According to estimates by the United Nations (UN), the number of Macedonian citizens who lived abroad at the end of 2017 was 534 720¹²; according to estimates by the World Bank 626 312 Macedonian citizens lived abroad in 2013¹³. The data from both estimates are based on statistics of foreign residents in industrialised nations.

² Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the Labor Force Survey, IV Quarter 2021, available at <https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie.aspx?rbtxt=98>

³ Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the Labour Force Survey 2006. News Release, State Statistical Office, May 2007, available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Arhiva.aspx?id=14>

⁴ Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the Labour Force Survey. I quarter 2020, News Release, June 2020, State Statistical Office, available at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie.aspx?id=98&rbr=3332>

⁵ op. cit. Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the Labor Force Survey, IV Quarter 2021

⁶ World Bank Country Snapshot, April 2020, available at <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/875131588764278620/North-Macedonia-Snapshot-Apr2020.pdf>

⁷ Webpage of the State Statistical Office, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto.aspx?id=7>

⁸ World Bank Country Snapshot, April 2020, available at <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/875131588764278620/North-Macedonia-Snapshot-Apr2020.pdf>; State Statistical Office, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Default.aspx>.

⁹ Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP) 2022, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, December 2019, available at <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/espr-espr.nspj>

¹⁰ ESRP, p. 25, based on SSO LFS data

¹¹ See for example, Тренческа: минималната плате ќе расте и до крајот на мандатот ќе изнесува 20.000 денари, [Trenchevska: The Minimum Wage Will Continue to Rise and by the End of the Government's Mandate it will be 20.000 denars], 360, 24 January 2022, available at <https://360stepeni.mk/trenchevska-minimalnata-plata-ke-raste-i-do-krajot-na-mandatot-ke-iznesuva-20-000-denari/>

¹² Filipovski, Brendan, Емиграција од Македонија: од 1990 до 2017 [Emigration from Macedonia: from 1990 to 2017], Macedonia 2025, refers to UN report on migration, available at <https://www.macedonia2025.com/mk/archives/emigration-from-macedonia-1990-to-2017/>

¹³ See, for example, Dodevska, Aneta, Секој трет образован ја напуштил Македонија [Exodus: Every Third Educated Person Has Left Macedonia], Prizma, November 2016, available at <https://prizma.mk/egzodus-sekoj-tret-obrazovan-ja-napushtil-makedonija/>

The census conducted in 2021 (of which the final results are not yet available) provisionally indicated that the country's population has declined by around 10% in the past two decades since the last census in 2002.¹⁴ The count added up to an estimated 1.8 million people living in the country. Migration has distorted the demographics of the country, with most of the emigrants being in the age cohort 20-35, and it has had significant effect on the labour market (see further details in this section below).

According to the revised ESRP 2022, the labour market positions of a) young people and b) women are the two key structural problems in the labour market in the country. Another issue is the skills and qualifications of the labour force overall, which derives from the quality of the education. According to the first LFS conducted in 2020 just before the start of the pandemic, the unemployment rate of young people (15-24) in the country stood at 34.9%; it was 33.1% and 37.9% for men and women respectively.¹⁵ According to most recent data, the overall youth unemployment rate stayed unchanged in the last quarter of 2021 at 34.9%; there were small changes in the rate for men, which declined to 30.9%, and for women, which rose to 42.9%. In other words, during the pandemic, the unemployment of men fell and that of women rose.¹⁶ The activity rate for young people (15-24) was 31.9%; 38.2% and 25.2% for men and women respectively. In the last quarter of 2021 it fell to 28.1%; 36.3% and 19.3% for men and women respectively.¹⁷ The employment rate at that point for young people (15-24) was 20.8% (as opposed to 48.1% for the overall population); 25.6% and 15.7% for men and women respectively.¹⁸

These data point to two structural characteristics of the labour market position of young people in North Macedonia. First, youth unemployment rates remain high, and second, young women are at a clear disadvantage compared to young men. In addition to the lower activity rate for young women (25.2%), which means that more of them are not in the labour market at all (i.e., they are not looking for jobs), those women who are looking for jobs are less likely to find them and the unemployment rate for young women (37.9%) is higher compared to that for young men. These two indicators together present the full extent of young women's disadvantage in the labour market in North Macedonia.

According to the revised ESRP 2022, in 2016 there were around 136 000 young NEETs in the country, which is roughly around 1/3 of the total youth population. The NEET rate compared to the total youth population remained stable in the few years before 2016; however, the NEET rate for the 15-24 age group was 24.3% in 2016, which was a significant fall from 2006 when it was 41.3%. The largest share of the NEET population in 2016 (60%, or estimated 83 000 persons) were unemployed non-students, and the remainder of the estimated 53 000 persons were inactive non-students. Of the inactive NEETs, 26% were inactive and taking care of their family, and 7.5% were 'discouraged' (persons who had once looked for a job but gave up because they could not find one).¹⁹ The NEET rate remained stable in the period 2017-2018 with 24.9% and 24.1% respectively, and then declined in 2019 to 18.1%.²⁰ The onset of the pandemic reversed the trend and the NEET rate subsequently increased in 2020.²¹

¹⁴ Пописот завршува денес во 20 часот – досега попишани на 1.8 милион лица [The Census Closes Today at 20h. Over 1.8 Million Persons Surveyed To Date], Radio MOF, 30 September 2021, available at <https://www.radiomof.mk/popisot-zavrshuva-deneska-vo-20-chasot-dosega-popishani-nad-1-8-milion-lica/>

¹⁵ op. cit. Labour Force Survey. I quarter 2020

¹⁶ op. cit. Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. Results from the Labor Force Survey, IV Quarter 2021

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ Revised ESRP 2022, December 2019, pp. 29-30, based on SSO LFS data.

²⁰ EU Progress Report on North Macedonia 2021, European Commission, p. 44

²¹ See for example, North Macedonia's Youth Guarantee: Knocking back the numbers of NEETs, European Training Foundation, 11 August 2021, available at <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/north-macedonias-youth-guarantee-knocking-back-numbers-neets>. The ETF text uses a slightly different indicator: the NEET rate is reported for the age cohort 15-29.

The current **Strategy for Education 2018-2025 and Action Plan**²² describes a number of challenges for education in the country. At the level of primary education, they include: ‘worryingly low’ educational attainment, lack of standards, curricula which are not locally relevant, inadequate delivery of civic, environmental and entrepreneurship education, exclusion of Roma children, insufficient ethnic integration, lack of quality control, and other factors.²³ The strategy specifically indicates the lack of ‘professional and career orientation’ as a challenge:²⁴ ‘Often, the content which is taught remains disconnected from real and professional life; pupils do not get enough information of relevance, in particular about vocational occupations, and they lack support for selecting vocational schools and occupations which are in demand on the labour market’.²⁵

The challenges to secondary education, according to the strategy, include: outdated curricula, textbooks containing old stereotypes and prejudices, lack of ethnic integration, poor territorial distribution of schools, inconsistent quality control, and lack of teacher training, among other.²⁶ The challenges to secondary education do not specifically indicate the lack of career guidance, which was the case with primary education. Relevant comparative data on the quality of the education system in the country are provided by the regular PISA assessments of the knowledge of students in secondary schools (Revised ESPR 2022; Revised ESRP 2021). According to results from past assessments, Macedonian students are consistently among the worst performing in Europe and fare poorly in regional terms as well.

The Strategy for Education 2018-2025 succinctly notes some of the key challenges to VET in North Macedonia: secondary VET does not attract a sufficient number of students, with exception to certain programmes, such as health, economics, and law; the number of technical courses in the VET programmes is the lowest in Europe, with 52% compared to 70% in Europe, which means that ‘the VET is closer to general secondary education’; the amount of practical training is very low, 20-30% on average, compared to over 60% in Europe; large share of the students from marginalised groups enrol in secondary VET, and are not sufficiently integrated; this particularly concerns Roma students and students with disabilities.²⁷ The description of challenges to VET briefly mentions that schools do not have career counsellors.²⁸

The country’s Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022 (ERP 2020-2022)²⁹ notes that fewer than 10% of the companies in the country have communication with educational institutions, and that the VET system produces narrowly defined occupational profiles and lacks flexibility.³⁰ The PER 2020-2022 indicates that enhanced support to VET is needed including investment in teacher training. The key conclusions in the PER are taken from the Strategy for Education 2018-2025, however, additional analytical input from the PER authors is also included. The PER 2020-2022 also notes the piloting of the dual VET system which is underway and the need of developing new system for financing VET which would enhance its flexibility.

The Revised ESRP 2022 looks into the rates of enrolment in VET over a period of one decade (2008-2017) and indicates that the interest in VET has remained stable, with some 59% of all secondary school students enrolling in VET. This data contradicts that common perception that the interest of VET has been declining in general due to its obsolescence. The issue of VET reform has commonly been

²² Republic of North Macedonia, Strategy for Education 2018-2025 and Action Plan, available at <https://mon.gov.mk/page/?id=2048>

²³ *ibid*, pp. 36-37

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 37

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 37

²⁶ *ibid*, pp. 43-44

²⁷ Strategy for Education 2018-2025, p. 48-49

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 49

²⁹ Programme for Economic Reforms 2020-2022, Republic of North Macedonia, Ministry of Finance, January 2020, available at <https://finance.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/%D0%9F%D0%95%D0%A0-%D0%9C%D0%9A%D0%94-2020-2022-%D0%BC%D0%BA-1.pdf>

³⁰ PER 2020-2022, p. 90

associated with a declining interest in VET. In light of the data, this needs to be reframed and the argument should focus on increasing enrolment in VET.

There is an obvious structural mismatch between labour market demand and supply. An important part of the solution lies in the reform of the education system, in particular the reform of VET. This is also an issue of particular relevance to the national system of career guidance.

A relevant recent analysis of the skills demand in the labour market in North Macedonia as well as the skills mismatch was produced by the European Training Foundation (ETF) in 2019.³¹ According to the ETF report, the structure of employment by type of occupation has changed significantly in the decade 2008-2017. The change is primarily in the relative decline of lower-skill jobs and increase of the share of higher skills jobs. According to the ETF study, the demand for higher skill jobs has been on the increase in the economy, whereas the demand for lower skills jobs has decreased; in the period 2008 to 2017, the share of elementary occupations decreased from 25.2% to 16.4% of all employment; in the same period the share of professionals (ISCO nomenclature, ILO) increased from 8.9% to 15.4%.³² Overall, the past one to one and a half decades have been a period of significant change in the Macedonian economy and labour market. After a protracted transition crisis period, the economy started to add jobs; at the same time migration accelerated. Both these trends have exacerbated the problem of the structural mismatch between labour market demand and supply, which was previously partly concealed by the very low levels of employment. This structural background poses specific challenges for the national system of career guidance.

1.2 System overview

The national system for career guidance is a collection of elements provided in a number of legislative and strategic documents. The two key domains of relevance for the system of career guidance are education and employment. The national career guidance system is hence defined to a large extent by the policy framework regulating these areas.

The key institutions in these areas are the MES, MLSP, BDE, ESA, CAE, and CVE. In the field of education additional key stakeholders are the primary and secondary schools, as well as the universities. They are the first-order provider of career guidance services. In the field of employment, the additional key stakeholders are the ESA branches nationwide, which are responsible for direct CG services provision.

Additional elements of the system are included in the policies on other areas, in particular on youth. These may be considered transversal or cross-cutting in that they intersect thematically the fields of employment and education as relevant to young people. The legislative and strategic documents of relevance to the national system for career guidance will be discussed in detail in the next section of the report.

³¹ Skills Mismatch Measurement in North Macedonia, European Training Foundation, 2019

³² *ibid*, p. 23 (Table 2.2)

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 Education

The field of education includes all levels of formal education, from primary to university. It also includes VET as well as adult and non-formal education. The next section will first review the legislative frameworks and recent developments across educational levels and then discuss the strategic documents in the field of education.

2.1.1 Legislative Framework

The new **Law on Primary Education**³³ adopted in 2019 regulates the professional orientation of students in Article 47. The provision specifies that professional orientation involves support to students and their parents in choosing a secondary education programme according to the student's aptitudes. The second paragraph of Article 47 specifies that the school psychologist or teacher 'uses tools to assess the students' aptitudes and interests and implements a programme for professional orientation for students from the 8th and 9th grade'. This programme, which is placed under the responsibility of the school psychologist or teacher, is to be produced by the minister at a proposal by the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE).

The **Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025 for 2019 and 2020**,³⁴ indicates that the programme referred to in Article 47 of the Law on Primary Education has been prepared. Its title is **Programme for Professional Orientation of Students from the 8th and 9th grade**.³⁵ The programme document (13 pages) provides instructions to school teachers and/or psychologist for running the programme. The document defines the concept of professional orientation, elaborates the concept of active process-based professional orientation, links the professional orientation with the development of eight key competencies, explains the didactics of the implementation of professional orientation, defines and describes the phases of the programme for professional orientation and the goals of each phase. The three phases indicated by the programme are self-awareness, professional orientation, and decision making.

The **Law on Secondary Education**³⁶ does not include any references to career orientation. The Strategy for Education 2018-2025 (discussed below) provides some reporting on activities related to career guidance implemented in secondary schools in the previous period, as well as discussed challenges and priorities for the period ahead.

The **Law on Vocational Education**³⁷ includes a reference to career orientation in Article 32 which defines the competencies of the Centre for Vocational Education (CVE). The provision reads that the CVE 'facilitates the career development and professional orientation of students in vocational training'. The report on the implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025 (next section) indicates that a new draft law on Vocational Education has been in the works and that it places greater focus on career guidance in secondary VET.

³³ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Nos 161/2019 and 229/20.

³⁴ Ministry of Education and Science, available at <https://mon.gov.mk/page/?id=2048>

³⁵ available at <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Programa%20za%20profesionalna%20orientacija.pdf>

³⁶ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Nos 44/1995, 24/1996, 34/1996, 35/1997, 82/1999, 29/2002, 40/2003, 42/2003, 67/2004, 55/2005, 113/2005, 35/2006, 30/2007, 49/2007, 81/2008, 92/2008, 33/2010, 116/2010, 156/2010, 18/2011, 42/2011, 51/2011, 6/2012, 100/2012, 24/2013, 41/2014, 116/2014, 135/2014, 10/2015, 98/2015, 145/2015 and 30/2016.

³⁷ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Nos 71/06, 117/08, 148/09, 17/11, 24/13, 137/13, 41/14, 145/15, 55/16 and 64/18, 275/19.

North Macedonia adopted a new **Law on Higher Education**³⁸ in 2018. The new legislation includes a provision on career orientation in Article 68. The provision requires that each university establishes at least one career centre. The law specifies that work of the career centre is to be regulated by the university senate.

The **Law on Adult Education**³⁹ includes a short reference to career orientation. Article 36 lists the competencies of the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) which includes facilitation of the 'career development and the professional orientation of participants in adult education'.

2.1.2 Strategic Documents

The key strategic document of relevance to education in North Macedonia is the **Strategy for Education 2018-2025 and an Action Plan**. The strategy lists the 'strengthening of the system for career orientation and counselling' among its general priorities.⁴⁰ It indicates the lack of career orientation as a challenge in primary education⁴¹, and notes the lack of career counsellors as a challenge for vocational schools.⁴² The strategy priorities related to career guidance include:

- (a) for secondary vocational education: that students who graduate are skilled for making informed career choices by introducing professional orientation and career counselling and guidance;
- (b) for secondary schools/high schools: promoting career counselling of students by opening career centres staffed by trained career counsellors who are part of the teaching body;
- (c) for university education: that graduated students are skilled for making informed career choices by introducing orientation and career counselling at all universities.

The strategy reports that 'for the purpose of career orientation of students, career centres have been established in [secondary] schools staffed by trained career counsellors selected from among the teaching staff'.⁴³ It further reports that their work is supported by a mobile app BIPO – Battery of Instruments for Professional Orientation, as well as that 'the career centres and career counsellors are not established in all the vocational schools', and that 'the teachers who work as career counsellors are teachers from the schools, trained by an USAID project'.⁴⁴

The Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025, for 2019 and 2020 provides additional information of developments in the field of career guidance, specifically in secondary VET. The report indicates the following developments: secondary VET teachers have been regularly providing career guidance services; the need has been identified for regulation of the job position career guidance counsellor through legislation; a '**Guide To VET Qualifications**' has been produced;⁴⁵ a programme on **Career Planning** has been put together for career guidance work in secondary VET;⁴⁶ and a guide for teachers and Students in secondary VET entitled '**Me and My Career**'.⁴⁷ The report also indicates that a new draft law on Vocational Education is under preparation and that particular attention has been

³⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Nos 82/2018

³⁹ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Nos 07/2008, 17/2011, 51/2011, 74/2012, 41/2014, 144/2014, 146/2015, 30/2016

⁴⁰ Strategy for Education 2018-2025, Ministry of Education and Science, p. 23

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 37

⁴² *ibid*, p. 49

⁴³ *ibid*, p. 47

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 47

⁴⁵ Centre for Vocational Education, available at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ejoTyjtSPx52yiWqoM8BA_yALGTXBK4p/view; produced with support from the **Employment for Education (E4E) project**

⁴⁶ Available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PC2efx4Wq3Ojp101ugPOBX_M6DdD6iOm/view

⁴⁷ Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xuEnuCDV2L5RfTWHnUxAj4w0eLLmNFZl/view>

given to defining and introducing the job position career guidance counsellor, and this is in the process of being drafted.⁴⁸

The **Strategy for Vocational Education and Training in the Context of Life-Long Learning 2013-2020**⁴⁹, prepared in 2013 with support from the European Training Foundation, included several specific measures related to career orientation in vocational education⁵⁰. Measure 3 under its Goal B2, required review of the work of the existing career centres in secondary vocational schools (to be completed in 2014); and its Measure 4 under the same Goal B2 required establishing of 51 career orientation centres in vocational schools (p. 64). Measure 2 under Goal B3 required revision of curricula and inclusion of courses for building competencies for life-long learning and career management. The review conducted for this report did not identify publicly available reporting or assessment on the results achieved by the strategy. The review also did not identify an effort or document for extending or updating the strategy.

The **Strategy for Adult Education 2019-2023**⁵¹ does not include references to career guidance.

2.2 Employment

The policy framework in the field of employment comprises the core legislation on the labour market as well as a number of strategic documents. The next section will first review the legislative framework and subsequently the strategic documents of interest.

2.1.1 Legislative Framework

The core legislation in the field of employment is the **Labour Code**.⁵² The law does not include provisions on career guidance. It includes a single reference in Article 25, paragraph 11 that the employer should facilitate the access of workers employed on a fixed contract to training and career development opportunities.

The **Law on Employment and Insurance in the Case of Unemployment**⁵³ regulates the responsibilities of the Employment Service Agency (ESA) and it does include provisions of relevance to career guidance in the country. The law specifies the ESA's mandate for assessing the skills and aptitudes of unemployed job seekers, preparing individual action plans, providing information about the labour market, referring job seekers to training or re-skilling, 'professional orientation of unemployed and other persons for the purpose of selection of occupation or employment, via testing or conversation' (Article 3, line 12), as well as 'research, monitoring, and analysis of the trends on the labour market'

⁴⁸ Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025 for 2019 and 2020, p. 58

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education and Science, available at https://csoo.edu.mk/images/vet%20strategy_mac%20-%20final.pdf

⁵⁰ The Dictionary on Vocational Education and Training includes definitions on career counselling and professional orientation. Career counselling is understood as 'services which help people define their goals and aspirations, to understand their identity, to research for the purpose of making the right decisions. Counselling encourages people to act and to make changes and it helps them manage their professions and careers; professional orientation is defined as 'individual counselling in the process of choosing a profession, based on the aspirations, interest, and aptitudes of persons to certain professions, and the opportunities and demand on the labor market. Professional orientation involves the services in the process of choosing a profession, including testing, conversation, sharing of information about the demand for certain professions, as well as the opportunities within occupations'. Dictionary on Vocational Education and Training, Centre for Vocational Education and Training

⁵¹ Ministry of Education and Science, available at <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/strategija-za-obrazovanie-na-vozasni-2019-2023-mk.pdf>

⁵² Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia Nos 62/2005, 106/2008, 161/2008, 114/2009, 130/2009, 50/10, 52/10, 124/10, 47/11, 11/12, 39/12, 13/13, 25/13, 170/13, 187/13, 113/14, 20/15, 33/15, 72/15, 129/15, 27/16, 120/18, 110/19.

⁵³ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, Nos 37/1997, 25/2000, 101/2000, 50/2001, 25/2003, 37/2004, 4/2005, 50/2006, 29/2007, 102/2008, 161/2008, 50/2010, 88/2010, 51/2011, 11/2012, 80/2012, 114/2012, 39/2014, 44/2014, 113/2014, 56/2015, 129/2015, 147/2015, 154/2015, 27/2016, 119/2016, 21/2018, 113/2018, 124/2019.

(Article 3, line 14). Section 7 of the law is entitled Professional Orientation of Unemployed Persons and Other Persons Seeking Work, and it includes six Articles (Articles 20 to 25) which define the ESA's responsibilities for provision of career guidance services:

Article 20 defines professional orientation to include testing, conversation, provision of information about occupation requirements and employment opportunities, as well as individual counselling for the purpose of occupation selection based on the person's skills and preferences. Article 21 defines the beneficiaries of career guidance services provided by the ESA. They include unemployed persons, pupils, students, employed persons, as well as persons with disabilities. Article 22 defines the territorial competence of ESA branches for delivery of career guidance services. Article 23 requires the ESA to cooperate with educational institutions in providing students from the final years of schooling career guidance services, to include 'lectures by scientists and experts, visits to exhibits, movies, companies, public institutions, and others'. Article 24 specifies that the ESA will recommend the most suitable job to the candidate after the completed career guidance. Finally, Article 25 specifies that ESA services are free of charge and are also regulated by the ESA.

The next section in the report on the strategic documents of relevance to career guidance in the field of employment provides some reporting on career guidance work done by the ESA, which is included in the new National Employment Strategy 2021-2027. Two recent pieces of legislation in the field of employment are also part of the government's effort to create opportunities for young workers. These are the Law on Internship⁵⁴ and the Law on Youth Allowance.⁵⁵ The objective of both these laws is to facilitate the integration of young people in the labour market, and thus they are of relevance to the national system for career guidance, in particular the Law on Internship which allows young people to 'dip their toe into' the world of work.

2.2.2 Strategic Documents

The previous **National Employment Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2016-2020**, included just a few short references to career orientation, most specifically related to the need for improving the labour market information 'with a focus on young people, and strengthening career guidance and counselling' (Measure 1.7 referring to responsibilities of the ESA; p. 75)⁵⁶.

The revised **Operational Plan for Active Programmes and Measures for Employment and Services on the Labour Market for 2020**⁵⁷, included 'professional orientation and career counselling' among the other services provided regularly by ESA offices, such as assistance with job searching, motivational training, and training for job searching. The short description indicated that career orientation could include individual and group counselling. An identical description is found in the Operational Plans for 2019 and for 2018.

The new **National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 with an Action Plan for Employment 2021-2023**⁵⁸, includes more focus on career guidance compared with the previous strategic document. The lack of career guidance is mentioned in relation to a tracer study⁵⁹ conducted in 2017, as a factor of difficulties in finding jobs by VET graduates. Career guidance is also mentioned among the key reforms

⁵⁴ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, No 98/2019.

⁵⁵ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, No 18/2020.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, available at <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/strategiji/Nacionalna%20Strategija%20za%20Vrabortuvane%20na%20Republika%20Makedonija%20za%20Vlada%2016102015.pdf>

⁵⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, available at <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nspix>

⁵⁸ National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 with an Action Plan for Employment 2021-2023, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2021, available at https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/trud/strategija_vrabortuvanje_2021_mkd.pdf

⁵⁹ Mojsovska-Blazevski, Nikica, Tracing secondary vocational and tertiary education graduates in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: 2016 tracer study results, European Training Foundation, 2017, p. 49.

in education that are lacking.⁶⁰ Career guidance is also brought up in relation to discussing the ESA's weaknesses, and in particular concerning the 'chronic lack' of psychologists, 'who are essential for provision of career guidance services and psychological support to persons at risk of exclusion'.⁶¹

The action plan for the period 2021-2023 refers to career guidance under 'Goal 1: Improving the quality of educational outcomes at all levels', and the related targets are: 'Reducing the vertical mismatch between skills and labour market demand for persons age 15-64, by 5 percentage points'; 'Improving the average score of pupils from North Macedonia in the international PISA assessments by 2025'; and 'Increasing by 30% the share of adults (25-64) in training'.

Career guidance is included as activity under Outcome 1.1 of this goal, which is about education reforms. Its activity 1.1.4 involves work on professional standards for teachers in primary education including also 'professional standards for career guidance and pilot-testing the curricula for teacher training'.⁶² Career guidance is also mentioned under activity 3.2.5 (Goal 3), referring to expanding the use of digital tools.⁶³

The **Operational Plan for Active Programmes and Measures for Employment and Services on the Labour Market for 2021** (last one available) lists the service 'professional orientation and career guidance'⁶⁴ among its other regular services. The description is identical with the description in the previous operational plan (discussed above) for 2020. The operational plan includes one additional reference to career guidance, in discussing the communication support to be provided to the implementation of the plan by the five info clubs which work under the slogan 'from information to a career'.⁶⁵ These info clubs will provide 'continuous communication support, with a focus on the recently introduced digital communication with students... [they] will continue to be focal points for presenting internship opportunities, employment in the private sector, direct meetings between business representatives and students'.⁶⁶

2.3 Youth

The field of youth transverses the areas of education and employment, given that both these fields of critical importance for young people. The policy framework on employment includes a number of elements of specific relevance to youth and of career guidance work with young people. The youth field, which comprises several legislative and policy documents, also includes some elements of relevance to the national system for career guidance. They will be reviewed in the next section of the report.

2.3.1 Legislative Framework

North Macedonia adopted a **Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies in 2020**.⁶⁷ The law is a short document of 27 Articles which mostly focuses on establishing and regulating new youth structures on national and local level, such as the national youth assembly, the national advisory body, the local youth councils, and the youth offices which are to be created by the municipalities. The law includes a few general references to the 'professional development' of young people, as a competence of the new youth bodies. There are no specific references to career guidance for young people.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 50

⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 58

⁶² *ibid*, unpaginated

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy p. 53

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 58

⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁷ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, No 10/2020

2.3.2 Strategic Documents

The previous **Action Plan for Youth Employment 2016-2020 (APYE 2016-2020)** included a strong focus on career orientation, as indicated by its strategic goal ‘improving the match of skills supply with labour market demand’. Career counselling was listed as Outcome 1.3 of this goal: ‘Young people have access to quality education and services for career orientation. By 2020 all students in North Macedonia will receive career orientation education in the final year of primary education and during their entire secondary and university education. All young persons registered with the Employment Agency (EA) will have access to quality information on the labour market. All young people who register for the first time with the Employment Agency (EA) will receive group career orientation and counselling for employment (short employment preparation training)’.

The estimated implementation cost was projected to be EUR 2 million for the period 2016-2020. Of this amount, EUR 0.5 million were to be provided by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for integrating career orientation in school curricula, and EUR 1.5 million by the ESA. The APYE 2016-2020 was revised in 2019, confirming the relevance of Outcome 1.3, noting that the number of high schools which offered career orientation had increased to 53, but that the number of students who could benefit from it was still limited, due to career orientation being an elective course, provided on project-basis, not integrated with the school curriculum. The revised APYE further noted that all unemployed young people who registered with the ESA could receive labour market information, and that 23% of young unemployed could receive specialised career orientation services; this limit was said to be due to the lack of skilled staff in ESA offices. The revised APYE 2016-2020 proposed a revised Outcome 1.3: ‘At least 30% of students in secondary and university education have access to career orientation services’; and ‘At least 30% of the young people registered with the ESA receive career orientation services’.

The **National Youth Strategy 2016-2025** includes one key reference to career guidance: Measure 4 under Goal 2 (promoting long term and multi-sectoral approach to youth employment) foresees provision of support to municipalities and higher education institutions for establishing career centres.⁶⁸

The **Plan for Implementing the Youth Guarantee 2020-2022**,⁶⁹ makes several references to career guidance. It indicates that the ESA needs to be further strengthened and, in particular, it needs to hire additional psychologists and career guidance experts;⁷⁰ and that some of the core services, including those related to career guidance, provided in ESA branches need to be redefined.⁷¹ It further refers to career guidance in the context of internships for young people.⁷²

The most recent document of relevance available on the website of the Agency of Youth and Sports is the **Work Plan of the Youth Sector for 2019**.⁷³ The plan is a short operational document which plans specific activities of the youth sector in 2019. It includes a few activities of relevance to career guidance work with young people. Specifically, it envisages the organisation of a career month and a career fair, and the organisation of job-shadowing combined with training in the high schools in four municipalities.

⁶⁸ National Youth Strategy 2016-2025, Agency for Youth and Sports, 2016, p. 27, available at <https://www.sega.org.mk/images/E-Library/Strategies/NSMK.pdf>

⁶⁹ Plan for Implementing the Youth Guarantee 2020-2022, available at <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nspix>

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 15

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 16

⁷² *ibid*, p. 24 and p. 28

⁷³ available at <http://ams.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/pzskm2019.pdf>

3. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Based on available data, there is at present very little coordination in the provision of career guidance between the institutions in the two main areas of provision, education and employment. The review of the legislative framework found only a single reference in the Law on Employment and Insurance in Situation of Unemployment, in Article 23, which refers the ESA to cooperation with educational institutions. The situation is fairly similar in the strategic framework. There are occasional provisions on cooperation between sectors, but there is no real data on such cooperation and its results. Thus, the conclusion is that there is little evidence of cooperation between the key stakeholders on the two key fields. This situation of working in ‘silos’ has been identified by Barnes⁷⁴ as an unfortunate common state of affairs in fragmented national systems for career guidance all over Europe.

The situation is somewhat different when it comes to cooperation with and between donors, international organisations, local organisations, projects, and so forth. There is relevant evidence that donor-funded projects do involve key national ministries in cooperation, that projects secure the endorsement and involvement of national institutions, that linkages between can be created. However, the indication is that such cooperation is temporary in character, that it ends with the expiry of the project funding, and that cooperation between projects and international organisations is also characterised by competition.

The overall conclusion is that the national system of career guidance is fragmented and that there is little coordination and cooperation at foundation level. This will probably not mean that there are not a vast array of instances of cooperation at a micro level, for example, students from a class visiting a local business, or a business representative talking to students in a school, which would be considered cooperation between the business sector and education. Such practices probably happen spontaneously at the grassroots, however, in the absence of official data it is not possible to say how much of this takes place.

⁷⁴ Barnes, Sally-Anne et al., *Lifelong Guidance Policy and Practice in the EU: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities*, European Commission, 2020, see, for example, pp. 16, 18, 49, etc.

4. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The next section of the report presents a review of practices, services, activities, and projects and programmes of relevance to career guidance in North Macedonia. The review is based on data collected primarily via desk research and interviews with key informants, as well as the consultation meeting with key stakeholders held on 3 February 2022. The review is structured by key fields. First the activities in the fields of education and employment are discussed, followed by a review of various project-based services and activities.

4.1 Education

4.1.1 Primary Education

As indicated in the section on the legislative and strategic framework, the new Law on Primary Education regulated the professional orientation of students in the 8th and 9th grades of primary schools. The law specifies that professional orientation involves support to students and their parents in choosing a secondary education programme according to the student's aptitudes. The provision (Article 47, second paragraph) specifies that the school psychologist or teacher 'uses tools assess to the students' aptitudes and interests and implements a programme for professional orientation for students from the 8th and 9th grade'. The Programme for Professional Orientation (8th and 9th grade) was produced in 2020.

At the time of writing this report, there is substantial evidence that primary schools have started to implement the provisions of the law concerning career guidance and are developing and implementing programmes for the students from 8th and 9th grades. Data has primarily been collected from the webpages of primary schools nationwide and from their annual work programmes. Differences in implementation between schools are evident. Some have better-elaborated programmes for career guidance, others have some more basic public information, however it is evident that the new regulation on career guidance in primary schools is being implemented. For example, the annual programme⁷⁵ of the primary school of St. Kiril and Metodi in Stajkovci, Municipality of Gazi Baba, Skopje includes a programme for professional orientation of students (annex 28) which consists of the following segments: 1) self-awareness; 2) provision of information about occupations and education opportunities; 3) search of occupations and education opportunities; 4) real contacts and meetings; and 5) decision making.

It is evident that the structure of the career guidance annual programme is closely consistent with the programme development by the MES. The specific activities include for example: workshop for developing self-awareness, life skills workshops, activities during the civic education classes, assessment of aptitudes and professional interests of 9-graders, visits to high schools, online search activities, meetings with high school professors, parents, experts, writing a CV, and so forth. The programme is well-structured and comprehensive.

The programme of another primary school, Manchu Matak from the rural municipality of Krivogashtani, also has several sections in its annual work plan dedicated to student career guidance. The sections (in the work programme annexes) are organised by a staff member who is responsible for doing the work, hence there is a section assigning responsibilities to the teacher, the psychologist, and the school's special educational needs teacher. Some of the listed activities include: assessing students' educational interest, professional interests, data analysis, provision of information to students about secondary education opportunities, organising presentations of secondary schools, individual and group counselling of students and parents.

⁷⁵ <https://www.ooukirilimetodij.edu.mk/sites/default/files/baza/godishna-programa-2021-2022.pdf>

The review of additional randomly selected primary school annual programmes available online, indicates that they generally include sections on career guidance. There is also some evidence that some schools engage more creatively, such as by producing videos on occupations.⁷⁶ The implementation of the programmes for career guidance of students from the 8th and 9th grades of primary schools only started in the pandemic school year 2020/2021 and is in its infancy. However, it does seem to be a promising step forward. Consistent monitoring will be needed to ensure that the career guidance plans are actually implemented, as well as to evaluate the results of their implementation, over the coming period.

4.1.2 Secondary Education

A number of written documents and webpages make references to career guidance work in secondary schools conducted by trained teachers, related ICT applications, established career centres and organisation of various career guidance activities. The origins of most career guidance activities in the general secondary schools are related to a USAID Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network project implemented in the period 2010-2015 (budget USD 6.7 million).⁷⁷ This is also reported in the Strategy for Education 2018-2025 which notes that ‘for the purpose of providing career guidance, career centres have been set up in the schools engaging trained career guidance advisors’ selected from among school personnel.⁷⁸ The strategy there credits the support from USAID. The document also notes that the work of the career advisors ‘is supported by a standardised tool – Battery of Instruments for Professional Orientation (BIPO)’.⁷⁹ This is a web-based service⁸⁰, but it is not available to the general public. It requires both the career advisors and students to log in. A number of secondary schools in the country have sections of their webpages dedicated to career counselling, and/or to their career centres. These webpages generally seem to be older and to contain little general information which is also not up to date. However, some webpages do provide information on current activities related to career guidance.

The Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025, for the years 2019 and 2020, provides a detailed description of activities in these 2 years (pages 38-49), however it does not report any activity on career guidance. A review of a sample of randomly selected annual programmes of general high schools does find content on career guidance activities implemented in some of the schools. For example, the Annual Programme 2020/2021⁸¹ of the Gymnasium Josip Broz from Bitola includes a short 1-page section on career guidance (p. 31) which lists activities such as: preparing a professional orientation programme; working with the BIPO, career counselling; and presentation of faculty programmes. Similarly, the Annual Programme 2020/2021 of the secondary school Kocho Racin from Skopje, also includes a short section on career guidance (p. 87), even though the content is fairly general. The information is also available on the school website.⁸² The Gymnasium Rade Jovchevski Korchagin in Skopje, in its Annual Programme 2021/2022⁸³, includes a detailed plan on professional student orientation, with discussions with students in this area, student surveys, skills assessments, higher education presentations, as well as presentations from relevant enterprises etc. (pp. 135-8). It also mentions providing assistance for professional orientation for talented students, as well as students with special needs, through individual discussions with students and parents (p. 134).

Not all secondary school annual programmes can be found online, however the sample of those identified online contained various levels of information on planned career guidance activities. The

⁷⁶ See for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcA3KGBTvgE>

⁷⁷ See for example <https://www.usaid.gov/macedonia/fact-sheets/youth-employability-skills-yes-network>

⁷⁸ Strategy for Education 2018-2025, p. 47

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p. 47

⁸⁰ <http://www.bipo.mon.gov.mk/>

⁸¹ Available at <http://gimnazija-jbt-bitola.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GODISNA-PROGRAMA-JBT-2020-21.pdf>; the text still refers to the USAID YES Network project.

⁸² <https://sugskocoracin.edu.mk/2020/09/09/rezime-na-proektot-sovetuvanje-za-kariera/>

⁸³ Available at: <https://rjk.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/godisna-programa-2021-2022-1-1.pdf>

content ranged from a single general paragraph to a fairly structured section of 2-3 pages in length. In general, little information is found on career guidance work which has actually been conducted. This indicates to the need for more systematic monitoring and reporting/documenting of career guidance work, which could produce synthesised data on the amount of services (in hours) delivered and numbers of students involved. As indicated earlier, such data is not found in the publicly available reporting of the MES.

4.1.3 Secondary VET

The second section, on secondary VET also lists a few examples of career guidance content found in school's annual programmes. It needs to be noted that the some of the schools combine both general secondary education and VET. The recent Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025 for 2019 and 2020 informed of developments in the field of career guidance, specifically in secondary VET. These developments mostly took place in 2020. The report indicates that several documents (programmes and guides) related to career guidance have been produced for the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, specifically a 'Guide Through VET qualifications',⁸⁴ a programme on Career Planning for career guidance work in secondary VET;⁸⁵ and a guide for teachers and students in secondary VET entitled 'Me and My Career'.⁸⁶ The report also indicates that a new law on Vocational Education is currently under preparation and that particular attention has been given to defining and introducing the job position of career guidance counsellor, and this is in the process of being drafted⁸⁷; and that secondary VET teachers have been regularly providing career guidance services, however the report does not offer specific details. There is thus a lack of systematic data on type, structure, frequency and content of career guidance activities in secondary VET.

Consistent with the review done for the general secondary schools (previous section), a review of a sample of randomly selected annual programmes of secondary VET schools does find content on career guidance activities implemented in some of the schools. For example, in the Annual Programme 2020/2021⁸⁸ of the technical secondary school Kiro Spandjov Brko in Kavadarci, the following activities in relation to career guidance are mentioned (p.120, p.128): informing students of higher education possibilities, preparing CV or cover letter, conducting standardised career counselling tests, etc. In the Annual Programme 2020/2021⁸⁹ of the Gymnasium Josif Josifovski in Gevgelija, forming a career centre is planned (pp. 62-63), which is to include the following activities: establishing contact with companies (in the service industry, auto-mechanic industry, etc.), organising meetings with the business community, informing students of labour market needs / higher education opportunities / self-employment opportunities, skills assessment of students, creating CV/cover letter and providing guidance for job interviews, creating business and marketing plans, etc. The Annual Programme 2019/2020⁹⁰ of the Gymnasium Georgi Dimitrov in Skopje includes a 2-page section on career guidance in its action plan (p. 30), listing such activities as: organising open days for higher education institutions, career counselling workshops, visit to the fair, visits to companies in the wood industry etc., as well as a more detailed 3-page section later on (pp. 93-95), where working with the BIPO, creating CV or cover letter, or visits by different companies are mentioned. It also briefly mentions two projects on career guidance (pp. 68-69).

⁸⁴ Available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ejoTytjSPx52yiWqoM8BA_yALGTXBK4p/view

⁸⁵ Available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PC2efx4Wq3Ojp101ugPOBX_M6DdD6iOm/view

⁸⁶ Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xuEnuCDV2L5RfTWHnUxAj4w0eLLmNFZI/view>

⁸⁷ Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Education 2018-2025 for 2019 and 2020, p. 58

⁸⁸ Available at: http://souksb.mk/?page_id=2

⁸⁹ Available at: <https://www.josifjosifovski.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/%D0%93%D0%9E%D0%94%D0%98%D0%A8%D0%9D%D0%90-%D0%9F%D0%A0%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%A0%D0%90%D0%9C%D0%90-2020-2021.pdf>

⁹⁰ Available at: <http://www.georgjdimitrov.edu.mk/linkovi/Godisnaprograma.pdf>

Consistent with the conclusion on general secondary schools, overall little information is found on career guidance work which has actually been conducted. This indicates to the need for more systematic monitoring and reporting and documentation of career guidance work in secondary VET, which could produce synthesised data on the amount of services (in hours) delivered and numbers of students involved. As indicated earlier, such data is not found in the publicly available reporting of the MES.

The MES issues a gender-responsive budget statement every 3 years and it monitors its implementation. A new gender-responsive budget statement was issued in 2022, which selects for monitoring the Quality and inclusive secondary education, sub-program Reform of secondary VET, with particular focus on the provision of equal opportunities for boys and girls in three specific occupations. The objective is to motivate girls to enrol into programs which they consider less interesting.⁹¹

4.1.4 Higher Education

As indicated in the section on the policy framework, the fairly recent Law on Higher Education specifies that each university should have at least one career centre. A desk search of university webpages and publicly available documents indicates to evidence of existence of career centres with a number of universities and faculties. For example, the University of Southeast Europe in Tetovo, has an entire webpage for its career centre.⁹² The page indicates that the university career centre organises events, including career fairs, helps organise internships, provides other career guidance services to students. The University of Goce Delchev from Shtip also has a separate web section for its career centre⁹³. The webpage provides some content such as on occupations, professional networking, company recruitment strategies, interviewing, instructions on student internship and so forth. Quite a few of the faculties from the largest university in the country, the St. Kiril and Metodi University in Skopje, have webpage sections with some fairly basic information on their career guidance work. A research project entitled 'The Role and Work of the Career Centres' at the St. Kiril and Metodi University⁹⁴, conducted in 2019 found that 2/3 of the career centres (12 of 18) existed only on paper. The research focused only on the largest public university in North Macedonia. It should also be noted that the research was conducted fairly soon after the enactment of the new legislation on higher education in 2018.

Nonetheless, consistent with the conclusion on the secondary schools, overall little information is found on career guidance work which has actually been conducted. This indicates to the need for more systematic monitoring of career guidance work at university level, which could produce synthesised data on the amount of services (in hours) delivered and numbers of students involved.

4.2 Employment

The new National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 provides information on ESA work in the field of career guidance in the most recent period. Specifically, the strategy notes that in 2019 over 95% of registered unemployed, or around 144 000 persons 'received labour market information and counselling', however that 'career guidance was provided to [only] three per cent of the registered unemployed' and these were primarily young people aged 15-29.⁹⁵ This three per cent were 4 281

⁹¹ <https://mon.gov.mk/page/?id=2048>

⁹² <https://careercentre.seeu.edu.mk/>

⁹³ <https://ckr.ugd.edu.mk/about.html>

⁹⁴ Tasevska, Angela, Улогата и работата на кариерните центри на Универзитетот Св. Кирил и Методи [The Role and Work of the Career Centres at the University of St. Kiril and Metodi], 2019 available at https://issuu.com/youtheducationalforum/docs/ulogata_i_rabotata_centar_za_karier

⁹⁵ *ibid*, pp. 58-59

persons (chart 33 in the document).⁹⁶ The strategy notes that ‘the low amount of career guidance services is due to the small number of psychologists in the ESA branch offices’.⁹⁷

It is indicative that the strategy makes a clear distinction between provision of LMI and counselling on one hand, which as it reports, was provided to over 95% of the registered job seekers, and career guidance, which it places under the strict competence of trained psychologists. It appears that, according to the strategy, the provision of LMI and counselling does not constitute career guidance. This is inconsistent with the concept of career guidance in other documents, such as for example the recent programme for career guidance in primary schools, which has a broader definition of career guidance, which also includes providing information of occupations.

This situation is not unique to North Macedonia, but it is commonly found across a number of countries. The ETF has recently defined such situation in a country as a ‘lack of shared understanding among policy makers and stakeholders of the primary purpose of career guidance services’.⁹⁸

In the field of employment, the ESA's regional centres provide career guidance services, for example, they prepare individual employment plans for new registrants. The plan is developed based on a personal interview with the unemployed person. Based on the interview, the person is categorised as easily employable, not easily employable, etc. The most recent ETF Country Fiche on North Macedonia identifies this as a ‘well-developed approach to individual profiling’.⁹⁹

The reported strong coverage of over 95% of the registered unemployed who have benefitted from counselling indicates that the ESA has managed to reach a large share of the registered NEETs (not in employment, education, or training). In addition, the ALMPs that ESA has been implementing over the past decade have expanded its outreach into the cohorts of inactive persons, that is, persons out of the labour force. Some of the ALMPs have been particularly effective, in particular the Self-Employment programme offering grants for business start-ups. The ESA has also implemented other measures for activation (bringing into the ESA) records or vulnerable groups, such as Roma.

The web portal of the Employment Service Agency (ESA) also provides regular LMI. This for example includes 1) data on vacancies by regions and industry, including a ranking of the top 25 industries with most vacancies; 2) data on registered unemployment (in nominal numbers), which can be disaggregated by sex, sex and region/municipality (covered by a local ESA branch), sex and education; and 3) analyses of demand of labour market skills. At the time of writing, the last report available on www.av.gov.mk is for the year 2020, produced in November 2019. The ESA webpage is linked to several related services, such as the webpage of its flagship national Self-Employment project (www.samovrabortuvanje.mk), the EURES webpage (https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/index_en). Not all of the links are active. The ESA webpage includes a section named www.e-rabota.av.gov.mk (‘e-rabota’ translates as e-work’) which provides services to both individuals and legal entities who are registered with the service. The services for individuals include: 1) data on CV views, companies which have favoured the CV, and recommended job ads; 2) individual job history; 3) CV upload section (with the options: public, private, locked); 4) job search engine; 5) surveys, 6) info on available training; and 7) interview invitations. The e-rabota service thus allows individuals (regardless of employment status) to create their personal career management accounts.

The home page of e-rabota also has a section on the international classification of occupations (ISCO 88), and an additional section for comparing occupations, with fairly detailed descriptions of competencies for different occupations. The functionality allows the user to select two different occupations from the ISCO 88 classification and to compare the required competencies/skills. The

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p. 59

⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁸ ETF CDS Systems p. 19

⁹⁹ North Macedonia. Education, Training, and Employment Development, European Training Foundation, 2021, p. 14

section for comparing occupations is also designed to provide data on, number of workers in the selected occupation in the EU, average salary, number of such workers in North Macedonia, and their average salary. The idea is to give to the use comparative LMI data. However, these functionalities are not working, they do not provide data. The e-rabota career management service is designed well. The concept is sound and the tool is similar to tools found across the EU. It is obvious, however, that some functionalities of the tool are not active, due to lack of data, and possibly other factors. There is no data on the number of individual users of the e-rabota portal.

4.3 Project-Based and Donor-Funded Initiatives

There is evidence of various project-based efforts which include career orientation work. These range from small projects run by small local civil society organisations (CSOs) to large projects in the field of education, employment or their cross-sections, which include career guidance in addition to their key focus (such as vocational education, adult education, etc.). A few examples have been mapped:

A recent project ('Nasoci.me', which translates as 'Guide.me'), run by a CSO start-up, Social Innovation Lab (<https://www.innovationlab.mk>) and with a focus on career guidance, has produced short videos featuring public personalities (actors, etc.) who provide advice. This is a small project funded by the City of Skopje. The webpage also includes a link to the mobile app BIPO.

The webpage zanimanja.mk has been set up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), with support from the International Labor Organization (ILO). The webpage is focused on providing professional orientation type information on a broad range of vocational occupations (how to qualify, labour demand, possible income, etc.). The purpose of the webpage is to promote interest in vocational education, but it also helps professional orientation.

Two current EU-funded projects (service contracts) which are currently under implementation are of relevance to the national system for career guidance in the country:

The SRPC (Sector Reform Performance Contract) EU for Youth (EUR 16.5 million) that the ETF supported to design is particularly significant for several reasons. It is the first budget-support project the EU has awarded to the country. It is among the first Youth Guarantee projects implemented in non-EU countries and the first one in the Western Balkans region.

The Youth Guarantee is a policy commitment to offer NEETs a new opportunity within 4 months of activation. The core rationale for the promotion of the Youth Guarantee is to prevent long term unemployment early in a person's life. The opportunity is provided within the set of existing ALMP measures, such as grants for self-employment, wage subsidies, internships, training, or reintegration into the education and training system. The National Strategy for Employment, the related strategies, and in particular the action and the operational plans describe the ALMPs in detail. The Youth Guarantee which is of central interest to the SRPC EU for Youth and this project, is regulated with these documents.¹⁰⁰

In a feature article on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in North Macedonia from August 2021, the ETF has noted relevant progress of the measure. The ETF article specifically reports the following: 'In its first year, the Youth Guarantee (YG) attracted 5 266 participants (2 694 of whom were women). Just under half (2 209 or 42%) successfully completed the Youth Guarantee with 1 972 finding jobs within 4 months (925 women) and 282 (187 women) being offered active labour market measures during the same period. Numbers on the Youth Guarantee quadrupled over the next 2 years – with 25 502 (12 863 women) registered by 2020, of whom 7 684 found employment within 4 months and overall 35%

¹⁰⁰ See for example, Plan for Implementing the Youth Guarantee 2020-2022, available at <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nspix>

(8 941) completed the scheme. Figures for the first 3 months of 2021 – with nearly 6 000 registered – suggest the scheme will prove attractive this year too'.¹⁰¹

The project 'Increasing attractiveness, inclusiveness and relevance of VET and Adult Education Location – Europe (non-EU)/Republic of North Macedonia' (EuropeAid/140265/IH/SER/MK), with a budget of EUR 2.3 million, is working on development, upgrading and implementation of procedures for validation of non-formal and informal learning as an important path towards quality education for adults, the development and implementation of programmes for post-secondary education, and the alignment of the national systems of VET and Adult Education with the EQAVET.

A large Swiss-funded Education4Employment (www.e4e.mk) project that is currently taking place aims to improve employment through supporting vocational education (formal and non-formal) in North Macedonia.

The project mladihub.mk ('mladihub' translates as 'youth hub') is implemented by the National Youth Council with support from the British Embassy and includes a programme component on career guidance for young people, in addition to promotion of internship, mentoring/tutoring, and a business acceleration work.

As part of its long term work in the field of employment, the UNDP works with the ESA branches nationwide, among other, to strengthen their capacity for delivery of career guidance services.

There is evidence that some of the large projects implemented in the field of career guidance have indeed left a legacy, such as the USAID YES Network project which is still, years after its completion, indicated in a number of strategies, annual work programmes and other official reports. However, it is also clear that smaller projects which, for example, produce good quality content with long-shelf life and post it online, can create an impact, despite the fact that they cannot continue the work after the expiry of the funding. Overall, the various projects of different scopes and sizes, do enrich the national system of career guidance in the country.

4.4 Private Sector Services

Finally, an additional domain of career guidance work which should be mentioned is found in the private sector. A particularly visible part of this domain is the profit-based job search and job advert companies and their web portals. They are sometimes referred to as PrESPs -private employment service providers.

The review conducted for this report has not identified a relevant recent research on how people find jobs in North Macedonia.¹⁰² However, it is considered axiomatic that job seekers primarily look for jobs on the private job portals, and that employers primarily advertise jobs on the private job portals (some of which can also be quite expensive). A job is most often advertised on the ESA portal usually to meet the formal requirements of the hiring process. This argument should be taken as anecdotal in the absence of hard data to confirm it. However, it is considered to be common knowledge.

The key purpose of the for-profit job portals is not to promote career guidance but to make profit. However, to some extent inadvertently, they offer LMI as well as other career guidance services to job seekers. For example, some of them offer information on types of occupations, good searches of occupations by regions, data on employers, as well as advice to job seekers.¹⁰³ Given the strong visibility

¹⁰¹ See North Macedonia's Youth Guarantee: Knocking back the numbers of NEETs, European Training Foundation, 11 August 2021, available at <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/north-macedonias-youth-guarantee-knocking-back-numbers-neets>.

¹⁰² Perhaps such a research exists but the review has not identified it.

¹⁰³ See for example <https://www.vrabotuvanje.com.mk/Pregled-Soveta/43/Proces-na-selekcija/>

these web portals have, which is essential to their business model, it can be expected that the career advice and information they provide reaches large numbers of people.

5. FUNDING

The career guidance services which have been identified by the review pertain to two distinct domains from the perspective of funding. The first is the public domain in the fields of education, employment, and youth. This domain is clearly publicly funded. The second is the (private or combined private-public) domain of provision funded usually by the donor community. The review did not identify specific funding allocations earmarked for career guidance in the public domain. The career guidance services are included as a line of work under the overall institution budget.

In the case of the project based-initiatives, it is clear that project funding has been allocated specifically for a project which is fully or in part related to career guidance. Thus, the two main funding streams for career guidance are the public and the donor funding.

Finally, the career guidance services which are inadvertently or not provided by the private sector, in particular the job advertising companies, are funded by the private sector.

6. ACCESS

The core focal points for delivery of career guidance services in North Macedonia are the primary schools, the secondary schools (general and vocational), and the ESA regional branches. Additional hubs are the career guidance centres at the universities. Overall, the country is fairly well covered with the network of primary schools, especially given its small territory (est. 25 713 km²). There are a total of 361 primary schools in the country. It should be noted that there are a total of 34 cities/towns in the country, some of which are very small (the smallest have as few as 2 000-3 000 inhabitants). The other communities are rural. The capital Skopje is estimated to account for at least 1/3 of the country's population (official census data are expected soon).

Given the recent development in the provision of career guidance in primary schools, which was discussed in the previous sections, it is fair to observe that the network of primary schools does provide good national coverage and hence access to students living in remote areas. This is assuming that the very small rural schools would have the resources to dedicate to career guidance. At secondary education level, there are a total of 108 public secondary schools in the country. This number also includes the secondary VET. In 73 of the 108 public secondary schools there is some VET component.¹⁰⁴ In addition, there are 18 private secondary schools in the country, most of which are in Skopje.¹⁰⁵

There are six public universities in the country, of which the largest, St. Kiril and Metodi, is in Skopje and there is one in each of the larger cities of Tetovo, Bitola, Ohrid, and Stip. In addition, there are 34 public-private and private higher education institutions. Of these, several are larger and the others are fairly small.¹⁰⁶

In the field of employment, the ESA has a total of 30 branches nationwide. The ESA has a total staff of 540 of whom 154 are in Skopje.¹⁰⁷ The ESA branches provide a balanced coverage of the territory and they are located in cities/towns. ESA services cover primarily the registered unemployed, however the ESA branches are also of services to inactive segments (who make part of the NEETS).

In 2020, an estimated 79% of the households in North Macedonia had access to the internet, up from 29% in 2008¹⁰⁸. According to the SSO, out of a total of 1.32 million persons in the age group 15-74, 1.15 million had used the internet every day in the last 3 months.¹⁰⁹

The access of marginalised groups to career guidance services is not easy to estimate. Hard data does not exist. Some qualitative arguments can be considered. North Macedonia has a fairly good regulation on economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.¹¹⁰ Incentives and ALMPs have been available. The general physical access to institutions is still considered insufficient. This would particularly be the case with institutions in smaller towns. A key issue is the stigma associated with disability, given North

¹⁰⁴ At present there are MES efforts for full operationalisation of regional VET centres and CG features strongly among their functions and responsibilities.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.na.org.mk/institutions-and-potential-applicants/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://mon.gov.mk/page/?id=2053>

¹⁰⁷

<https://av.gov.mk/content/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8/2021-Tabela%20na%20vrabotenite%20za%20na%20webstranata.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/702236/household-internet-access-in-north-macedonia/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%2079%20percent%20of,countries%20like%20Bulgaria%20and%20Greece.>

¹⁰⁹ North Macedonia in Figures 2021, State Statistical Office, 2021, available at

https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija_1_en.aspx?rbr=833

¹¹⁰ See, for example, *Profile on economic inclusion for people with disabilities and older workers: Republic of North Macedonia*, ERGON and EBRD, undated (more recent than 2020)

Macedonia's poor levels of general education. Roma still suffer significant stigma and discrimination even though positive developments can be observed in recent years.

The expansion of internet access, in combination with the proliferation of private employment service providers (PrESPs) and the increased use of online CG services, have been factors improved access.

7. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Relevant amount of the career guidance services which have been identified as part of this review rely on technology. This includes in particular the use of web portals (and or mobile applications) and the use of the video formats, in particular short videos, for dissemination of information, delivery of advice, administering self-tests and the like. Commonly used web functionalities for CG are searches, various menus, interactivity channels and the like. The most common use identified was provision of text online. No advanced technologies, such as use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) were identified.

Examples of use of technology include, for example: the BIPO as mentioned above and used in the secondary schools, key functionality of which is self-testing; the e-rabota web portal of the ESA (discussed above in the section on services); the use of creative videos featuring public personalities discussing career orientation; and other similar uses. The most common use of technology is for publishing and searching for information on the internet. Some of the PrESPs have web portals with significant visibility and good search options.

8. QUALITY OF PROVISION OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The review conducted for the purpose of this report did not identify quality control or evaluation efforts related to either the public sector programmes of relevance to career guidance in the fields of education and employment, or the periodic, project-based, career orientation work taking place in North Macedonia. The overall conclusion is that there is fairly little common understanding of even the classical concept of career guidance among education and employment practitioners. More recent concepts, such as career management skills, lifelong guidance, from testing to tasting, etc. are not known. Even when work can be considered to involve career guidance elements, practitioners often do not refer to this work as such.

Past project-based efforts for promoting career orientation in schools displayed a tendency to focus on the psychological aspects of the work; in many schools the designated career counsellor was the school psychologist (possibly also due to operational reasons), and the new Law on Primary Education specifically located the responsibility for career guidance with the school teachers and psychologists. As noted in the previous section, the new National Employment Strategy 2021-2027 also associates career guidance primarily with the work of psychologists.

At present, when asked about their understanding of career guidance work, some practitioners tend to emphasise only psycho-social aspects relating to the psycho-emotional preparedness of the individual (job seekers, workers, etc.). The understanding of labour markets is not considered part of career guidance or it is considered a less important component of the concept. Some practitioners indicate issues of individual preparation in the job search process, such as making CVs, cover letters, and behaviour during interviews. Testing of individual skills and aptitudes is also indicated as relevant part of career orientation.

There is no evidence of recent structured, larger scale training effort in career orientation for practitioners in key institutions. This does not preclude the existence of various smaller scale, project-based training efforts. Also, the review did not find any evidence of mechanisms or processes of accreditation or certification of career guidance professionals.

As regards the demand for career guidance, there is little data on how individuals of various ages make career decisions, or what is the overall need of career guidance services. Some sources indicate a rising demand for career orientation services particularly among young people, but there is little systematic evidence to confirm that this argument is valid for North Macedonia.

Overall there is significant difference between the commitment to career orientation on paper, in particular the commitment found in strategic documents, and reality. Barnes describes this level of development of a national career guidance regulation/legislation as 'notional' in that 'career guidance is included in legislation, but there is no follow-up on implementation'. It is more accurate to say that the system in North Macedonia is an early stage of transition from notional towards embedded. For Barnes, an embedded system is when career guidance is 'included in major legislation on education, vocational education and training and/or employment'.¹¹¹

An evident feature of the career guidance system in the country is the common presence of ICT-based services. The review identified a large amount of ICT-based content, tools, functionalities, and services of relevance to career guidance. Their obvious strong asset is that once designed and filled with data,

¹¹¹ Barnes, Sally-Anne et al., *Lifelong Guidance Policy and Practice in the EU: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities*, European Commission, 2020, p. 9

they require little follow-up, maintenance cost, or sustained effort by personnel. These ICT-based content and tools have been designed to enable user self-service. There is no evidence of blended service, in the sense of personally customised service by a professional, which supplements the ready-made content placed online. The ETF has reflected recently on this situation in the reality of career guidance across countries, noting that digital services ‘are often developed with disregard for the fact that people may not have the necessary digital and literacy skills to autonomously use them, nor the equipment or internet connection to access them. In many cases, digital services do not offer the possibility of professional support, nor do they offer any type of complementary delivery channel’.¹¹²

For example, quite a lot of LMI can be found online, on the website of the ESA, as well as in other online sources, and this is a relevant service. However, there is no interpretation of such data. For example, there is data available on the earning opportunities in various occupations in order to help orientation of beneficiaries. The predominant indicator of personal income by occupation used by all these LMI data sources is the average salary. There are clear indications that the concept of average salary is not fully understood by the majority of young (and perhaps older) people.¹¹³ It is often thought to mean ‘modal salary’ in the occupation. The concept of median salary is also generally unknown. This is not only typical of data on employment. It is common for other cornerstone socio-economic indicators which have historically become dominant in public discourse, such as GDP. Similarly, in common parlance, the term ‘NEETs’ is usually associated with ‘most vulnerable’ whereas this is not what the indicators mean.¹¹⁴ It is likely that the availability of LMI alone is probably not sufficient, or it is at least less than an optimal career guidance service. More generally, this data should ideally be supplemented by user-friendly analysis and interpretation. While it is doubtless important to promote user self-reliance, inter alia, through self-service, including also individual analysis of data, there are indications that career guidance beneficiaries could benefit more from the LMI if they were properly guided in their analysis.

¹¹²op. cit. *Career Development Systems*, ETF, p. 29

¹¹³ In the sense that the average salary for two individuals of whom the first has a salary of EUR 1 and the second a salary of EUR 499, is EUR 250. The consultant conducted a small, non-parametric survey on a convenience sample of 10 persons.

¹¹⁴ See for example, Elder, Sarah, *What Does NEETs Mean and Why is the Concept So Easily Misinterpreted?* Technical Brief 1, International Labor Organization, January 2015.

9. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

9.1 Summary of key findings

The system is at an early stage of development and at present there is no clear idea what constitutes career guidance, in other words, which activities and services are and which are not career guidance. The development of the national system would benefit from a broader debate with active participation of key stakeholders, which would, ideally, produce clear guidelines on the issue.

At present there is no consistent terminology for career guidance work. Different laws and strategic documents use different terminology, such as professional orientation, career development, and so forth. Whereas the meaning of the different terms can be inferred, there is room for inconsistent interpretation. Hence, the system development work would benefit from coordination over the key terminology. Internationally, it has proved beneficial to agree on the outcomes of career guidance across education, employment and youth sectors to find common understanding.

There is also no clear or common understanding on the profile and the required competencies of the career guidance professional. Some laws and strategic documents indicate it as 'core role' for psychologists and teachers which highlights the preponderance of the notation of career guidance as a process of psychosocial and emotional self-awareness. This seems to underestimate the importance of the labour market knowledge which is also inherent to the field.

Recently, 8th and 9th grades of primary schools have been given the legal obligation to provide professional orientation to students and their parents when choosing a secondary education programme. The origins of most career guidance activities in general secondary schools are related to a USAID Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network project. A programme on Career Planning has been produced for career guidance work in secondary VET, and a guide for teachers and students in secondary VET entitled *Me and My Career*, but there is little evidence of what actually takes place on the ground. A recent Law on Higher Education specifies that each university should have at least one career centre. In the field of employment, ESA's regional centres provide career guidance services, while only support by psychologists is perceived as career guidance.

There is very little data on career guidance work which has actually been done and on the effects of such work. This particularly applies to the field of education where schools are only stepping up with the career guidance effort. Significant monitoring, reporting, documentation, and evaluation effort is needed in this regard. There is no data on how job seekers find jobs, and what kind of career advice job seekers need and where they get it. More research is needed in this regard, and preferably based on longitudinal data, which could delineate some relevant trends over the medium term.

The increased demand for career guidance services is regularly mentioned in the literature. This may well be true in a cross-country perspective, in North Macedonia, however, there is no data whatsoever about what kind of career guidance people need and where they can get it. There is some partial data on the supply of career guidance but no data on the demand for it. This is an obvious area of need.

The education system should enable the development of career management competencies for individuals, including both students and adults. This involves a series of related activities: career guidance, provision of career-related information, individual and group counselling, skills assessment and psychometric testing, placements with employers, and development of skills for job search and self-employment.

9.2 Three key priorities

The following three key priorities emerge from the review and its key findings:

First, the country needs a broad debate on the outcomes and definition of career guidance. This debate would actively involve the key stakeholders and it would ideally benefit from expert international advice and review of cross-national perspective of definition, concepts and practices in career guidance. This can also build a good starting point for interministerial and inter-organisational coordination and cooperation.

A second priority is the need for a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for career guidance in general education. This effort is underway in primary schools, following the recent changes in the legislation on primary education, and it has been indicated that the new law on vocational education includes such provisions for secondary VET.

Following the completion of the previous two priorities, a large-scale training effort would be beneficial for CG staff in the school system as well as in the ESA branches nationwide. In addition to these general key priorities, the next section presents a number of specific recommendations for different stakeholders.

9.3 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 cover system, provider and practitioner level.

9.3.1 Policy framework

Short term

- Ensure a legal basis for career education and career guidance in secondary education.
- Legislatively regulate the job position 'career guidance practitioner' (exact term to be defined by country), for education, employment and youth contexts.
- Develop career guidance policy based on evidence through evaluating the outputs and outcomes of the Strategy for Vocational Education and Training in the Context of Life-Long Learning 2013-2020.
- Build a system for monitoring, reporting, documentation, and evaluation of career guidance activities.

Medium term to long term

- Make career guidance and career education an integral part of the Strategy for Adult Education to reach all adults, not just registered unemployed as per the Law on Adult Education that includes in the list of competencies of the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) the facilitation of the 'career development and the professional orientation of participants in adult education'.
- Extend the important core legislation in the Labour Code that the employer should facilitate the access of workers employed on a fixed contract to training and career development opportunities to workers in non-standard forms of employment, due to changes in the labour market.
- Introduce career guidance and career education as key role for youth workers and youth institutions, in close cooperation with schools, VET, universities, SEA, employer organisations, etc. in a legal document.

- Develop policies based on data from the system for monitoring, reporting, documentation, and evaluation of career guidance activities.

9.3.2 Coordination and Cooperation

Short term

- Establish an interministerial working group for career development support involving social partners, civil society and research to coordinate systemic governance of the system and the development of strategic reforms
 - as a priority, develop a joint understanding across stakeholders about career guidance and the primary purpose of career guidance services
 - build consistency in CG terminology; at present there is no consistent terminology for career guidance work
- Increase the involvement of employers/employer organisations in career education and career guidance activities in general education, VET and higher education in relation to, e.g. job shadowing, mock interviews, open days at companies, company visits to schools, sector presentations at schools as some sectors have a reputation that does not represent the actual situation in terms of job quality (salary, working conditions, etc.), internships, etc.
- Extend the cooperation of the ESA, as provided for in the legislation, with educational institutions in providing students from the final years career guidance services to all grades.

9.3.3 Services

Short term

- Develop specific services for NEETs which requires a new methodological approach, and train experts accordingly; develop an outreach strategy in partnership with NGOs, social and youth workers, etc.
- Collect and review all career guidance work ongoing and from the past (e.g. USAID project including career centre activities), analyse them against the need for career guidance in today's world as basis for developing common standards for learning programmes and teachers and centres for all schools
- Develop a consistent concept from career education from primary education, to secondary education, VET and higher education, building on current policy and practice. The rationale behind this is also the requirement to redevelop career guidance in the context of changing labour markets so that it remains effective and efficient. Other aspects of career education are: placing the development of career management skills alongside the traditional provision of career information at transition points, this being a long-term learning process covering social and emotional competence development including learning-to-learn competence; learning about the economy, the labour market, including trends therein, and about work and career concepts and critical reflections on these in order to build a vision of oneself in the context of career and work; learning about learning pathways, continuous learning opportunities, and practical skills such as CV writing, job search and identification of support opportunities. This therefore goes far beyond information about existing occupations and the skills required for them and helps tackle mismatches, drop outs, stereotypes, academic attainment, learning motivation, etc.
- Establish clear mandates for career centres across learning institutions focused around roles such as coordination with internal stakeholders (head teacher, teachers, librarian) and external stakeholders (parents, community businesses, chambers of commerce, sectorial bodies, other educational institutions etc.); create a physical open space in the educational institution with

access to both digital (computer workstations) and print material that can also be used for individual meetings and as a resource hub for career guidance practitioners; promote a whole school approach to career education (hanging posters in hallways, e.g. 'girls can do anything'); linking to further support services; provide information about scholarships, internships, vacancies, etc.; conduct tracer studies. Note, however, that each career centre does not need to do it all – it is possible to work in partnership with employer organisations, public employment service office, parent representations, and internally with, for example, librarians; there could also be one career centre for a certain group of schools in the same area, such as a district of a town that links also different school types.

- For universities, it is worth considering that career education could be carried out at faculty level (faculty specific programmes), and university wide career centres could support this work and provide additional university-wide activities
- Make the use of LMI a standard tool for career guidance practitioners in their work with clients across education, employment and youth
- Provide neutral career guidance including to increase the attractiveness, quality, and relevance of VET for boys and girls alike in line with LMI and skills forecasts and the real permeability and quality of VET programmes.
- Promote skills profiles which are lacking on the market, such as construction-geodesy, agricultural-veterinarian, forestry-wood processing, to 9-graders in five primary schools in the country, as opportunities in secondary VET, and acquiring competencies in demand on the labour market; use leaflets, posters, etc.

Medium term to long-term

- Offer specific services to workers in non-standard forms of employment
- Broaden the self-understanding of ESA staff to work also with new client groups like all workers, youth, etc. which requires different methodologies and approaches which is to be reflected in education and training.
- Develop a conceptual approach for tracer studies at the level of educational institutions, train practitioners in conducting them and ensure that results inform career education and career guidance work; ensure that data are collected centrally to create further insights at system level
- Ensure that private actors adhere to standards for career guidance set at national level (accreditation, register of professionals, etc.).
- Fund more research on career guidance needs; more research is needed and preferably it should be based on longitudinal data, which could delineate some relevant trends over the medium term.
- Harmonize on regular basis the career guidance system via the MES reports on gender-sensitive budgeting.

9.3.4 Funding

Short term

- Secure public funding for all currently foreseen career guidance practitioners by law in education, employment and youth sectors.
- Ensure funding for hiring enough staff for NEETs specific services.
- Specify the amount earmarked for career guidance in the general budgets to allow for monitoring input versus output and outcome.

Medium term to long term

- Ensure adequate staffing for the tasks of career guidance across education, employment and youth sectors.
- Identify opportunities for joint public-private and individual funding to allow all adults to access career guidance services like vouchers.

9.3.5 Access

Short term

- Work on ensuring availability of CG resources in primary schools in small rural communities; this could mean grouping smaller schools to share services.
- Work on promoting awareness of publicly available online employment services.

Medium term to long term

- Improve access of marginalised groups to physical CG services; develop outreach strategies targeted to the needs of groups, e.g. NEETs is not a homogenous group.
- Improve online outreach to marginalised groups.
- Invest efforts to enable access to career guidance resources for adults who for various reasons want to change their job or occupation, or who want to progress in their career.

9.3.6 Use of technology

Short term

- Review existing use of ICT for career guidance (from donor projects and other activities) like the USAID supported 'Battery of Instruments for Professional Orientation (BIPO)' and identify what works and how to build on them
- Ensure e-rabota career management service functionalities are all active – ensuring data availability, etc.
- Ensure good integration of existing digital tools into existing services
- Use ICT to bring services from education, employment and youth together as system, create one national online entry point: consider using the ESA webpage that already offers a great amount of information as single entry point for all stakeholders

Medium term to long term

- Adapt online and digital services to user needs (parents, students, PES workers, teachers etc.) by e.g. avoiding having one website with information for all and instead developing sections for user groups such as parents, school students, career guidance practitioners, etc. as, for example, LMI will need to be presented differently to each group
- Develop a systematic approach to the use of ICT for career guidance based on identifying the added value of online and digital services for the country, e.g. offer of self-services to reduce overload of career guidance practitioners while linking those services to personal career guidance service offers in case of further need etc.
- Use the private job vacancy portals to provide further input for LMI on the ESA website based on the use of AI and big data

9.3.7 Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement

Short term

- Review all existing training courses for career guidance professionals, analyse what works and can be further used in a process to develop standards for practitioners across education, employment and youth areas; e.g. review training materials of the USAID project – build on the legal approach to standards for primary education.
 - Work to develop common understanding of the career guidance profession. There is no clear or common understanding on the profile and the required competencies of the career guidance professional. Some laws and strategic documents indicate to a ‘core role’ for psychologists and teachers which indicates to the preponderance of the notation of career guidance as a process of psychosocial and emotional self-awareness. This seems to underestimate the importance of the labour market knowledge which is also inherent to the field.
- Build on the fact that national action plans accompanying the strategies do include clear targets, hence they are a 2022 baseline to facilitate continuous monitoring of inputs and outputs and evaluation of outcomes. Decide on whom to monitor in education, employment and the youth sector.
- Work to develop robust monitoring and reporting on career guidance services. This particularly applies to the field of education where schools are only now stepping up with the career guidance effort. Significant monitoring, reporting, documentation, and evaluation effort is needed in this regard.

Medium-term to long-term

- Accompany the ambitious goals set for career guidance in latest strategies and laws with capacity development and training of existing practitioners; involve teacher training institutes, universities etc. in carrying out the large-scale training courses based on common standards
- Develop adequate certificate level training programmes, as well as BA and MA programmes. Ensure to include the learning of diverse working methodologies that are needs-based and also, for public employment services, go beyond traditional matching skills to jobs to fill open vacancies. The system is at an early stage of development and at present there is no clear idea on what constitutes career guidance, in other words, which activities and services are and which are not career guidance. The development of the national system would benefit from a broader debate with active participation of key stakeholders, which would, ideally, produce clear guidelines on the issue.

ACRONYMS

ALMP	Active Labour Market Measures
APYE	Action Plan for Youth Employment
BDE	Bureau for Development of Education
BIPO	Battery of Instruments for Professional Orientation
CG	Career Guidance
CVE	Centre for Vocational Education
CAE	Centre for Adult Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ERP	Economic Reform Programme
ETF	European Training Foundation
ESA	Employment Service Agency
ESRP	Economic and Social Reform Programme
EURES	European Employment Services
EQUAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
ILO	International Labor Organization
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMI	Labour Market Information
MES	Ministry of Education and Science

MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PrESP	Private Employment Service Provider
SRPC	Sector Reform Performance Contract
VET	Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YES	Youth Employability Skills

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