

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW REPORT LEBANON

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education, training and labour market systems are increasingly challenged by global developments such as new and rapidly changing technologies, the 4th Industrial Revolution, demographic changes and climate change. 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 facts can be asserted: 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 hand-in-hand 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. Changes in delivery and developing the innovation capacity of career development support services are required to achieve deeper impact and empower individuals to manage their own career paths. Technology is already having an impact on traditional services, and the concept of career-management skills is increasingly gaining ground, not only in Europe but also on other continents. **To inform national policy and practice and EU support, the ETF and UNIMED decided to jointly run a series of system reviews focused on career guidance and counselling in the region of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.**

This report focuses on Lebanon. It extracts information on the career guidance¹ policies and services currently in place. While the methodology for the career guidance system reviews, already applied in Western Balkans and Eastern European countries, foresees wider stakeholder consultations, the security conditions in Lebanon did not allow for such approaches. Therefore, the primary sources used in Lebanon were desk research and knowledge acquired through the ETF country work in the field especially in regard to general education and technical and vocational secondary education for identification and collection of information on policies and practices related to career guidance, career education, career development support and related services offered. Consequently, the amount of data and information as well as depth or width of insights reflects the existing sources, documented aspects of career guidance provision in the country which generally reflects a certain level of scarcity in datasets and evidence on provision, coverage and impact of such services.

To set the scene for this report, a **definition of career guidance** shall be provided, defined in the joint statement ‘Investing in career guidance’ of EU and UN institutions and agencies:

‘Career guidance describes the services which help people of any age to manage their careers and to make the educational, training and occupational choices that are meaningful for them. It helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, skills and talents – and to relate this knowledge about who they are to who they might become in life and work. Individuals, families and communities differ in the extent to which they are able to visualise and plan their future. It is an important role of career guidance to address such differences and inequalities.

The overall aim of career guidance is to develop the capacity of individuals to manage their careers (known as ‘career management skills’). It involves a range of connected learning activities that help people to access services, resources and experiences related to employment and further education and training. These include provision of: careers education, careers information, individual and group

¹ In some countries, terms such as ‘career counselling’, ‘career development’, ‘careers information, advice and guidance’, ‘vocational counselling’ or ‘vocational guidance’ are used to refer to the range of activities that is included here within the term career guidance.

guidance/counselling, skills assessment and psychometric testing, engagement with employers, and the development of skills needed for job seeking and self-employment.

Career guidance is delivered face-to-face, at a distance or in a blended mode. Guidance is provided to people in a wide range of settings: primary and secondary schools and vocational training centres, tertiary and higher education institutions; public and private employment services; public and private career guidance centres; in workplaces, trade unions, NGOs and professional bodies as well as in local community settings. Career guidance is important within educational provision, skills development, social protection measures and active labour market policies.

Career development is a continuous process throughout life. It is fundamental to the smooth transitions of young people as they, in ever greater numbers, are presented with choices about continuing education and training and to adults needing to upskill, reskill or to move within the labour market. It is not only the unemployed who are in need of career guidance. Now more than ever, as demand for labour is changing rapidly, it is also relevant to people in work who are looking to move jobs.' (Cedefop, European Commission, ETF, ILO, OECD, UNESCO, 2021).

2. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

2.1 Country context

The objective of this section is to provide a brief and concise description of the institutional, political, socioeconomic, demographic, cultural, geographic and environmental issues which may bear relevance to how career decisions are made by individuals and the role career development may play.

Lebanon has a unique sociopolitical setting as a result of its confessionals' political system and its challenging geopolitical environment. Despite the country's fragile internal political situation and its position at the centre of strong international tensions, Lebanon has largely succeeded in preserving democracy, while continuing to combine an extremely flexible, open-minded and entrepreneurial population.

It is also a country characterized by high migration flows, both emigration of Lebanese citizens and immigration of foreign workers (mainly temporary) and refugees, since 1948 from Palestine and more recently from Syria.

Lebanon faces its most devastating socio-economic crisis in recent history. Since October 2019, the Lebanese pound has been drastically devalued – by over 98% – causing a staggering inflation rate of 210% between June 2021 and June 2023. The cost of meeting essential needs has risen more than 14 times since the crisis began. This crisis threatens to push vulnerable populations, which include Lebanese citizens, migrant workers and refugees, further into poverty unless something can be done urgently to provide them with their essential needs such as food, electricity, health and education. Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, including 1.5 million Syrian refugees and over 489 000 registered Palestinian refugees, which is causing an immense strain on resources. The escalation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel in autumn 2024 determined further population displacements.

Weak job creation and low-quality jobs remain the main factors driving persistent poverty and the lack of inclusive economic growth. The labour market in 2022 was characterised by increased skills gaps, lack of interest in the jobs on offer due to low wages and poor working conditions, and limited capacity for investment, which in turn translated into lower capacity for growth (UNICEF, ILO, 2022).

According to the 2022 Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS), the overall unemployment rate rose from 11.4% in 2018 to 29.6% in 2022, indicating that almost one third of the population is unemployed. The youth unemployment rate increased from 23.3% in 2018 to 47.8% in 2022, while the female unemployment rate stood at 32.7% (CAS, ILO, 2022). Considering time-related underemployment and the size of the potential labour force, including factors such as being discouraged from searching for jobs, the survey revealed that 29.4% of the extended youth labour force were in various forms of labour underutilisation. In 2022, the highest rates of labour underutilisation were experienced among the youth population (15-24 years) (64.2%) and women (57.1%) (CAS, ILO, 2022). Trade (both wholesale and retail) still accounts for the largest share of employment (20% of total employment), with public administration and defence in second place (around 10-12%), followed by manufacturing (around 10-12%) (ILO, CAS, 2022). The share of employment in the informal sector increased by 13.1 percentage points to reach 48.3% in 2022. The construction sector had the highest rate of informal work (84%), followed by hospitality (69.2%) and real estate, business and administration (66.1%) (ILO, UNICEF, 2022).

Education and training have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the devastating explosions that shook Beirut in August 2020, the high numbers of refugees, the political deadlock and the economic crisis. The crisis has also had a severe impact on the education sector, compromising the wellbeing of school-aged children in Lebanon. Many of the most vulnerable are being deprived of their right to education and are at a higher risk of exploitation and abuse than previously. More than 10% of the 1.2 million Lebanese children do not currently have access to education, mainly due to

economic vulnerabilities; all of the above has been compounded by teachers' strikes and safety concerns, which has especially affected girls' schooling.

When it comes to demographics, primary data on the recent demographic and systemic vulnerabilities among the Lebanese and migrant population remains limited despite efforts to increase data collection and collective analysis. Lebanon's total estimated population increased from 4.953 million in 2010 to 5.592 million in 2021, to go down again to 5.489 million in 2022.

The country is undergoing a demographic transition, characterised by a sharp reduction in fertility rates and a significant increase in life expectancy. The relative size of the 15–24-year-olds age group decreased from 28.8% in 2010 to 24.7% in 2021 but increased to 26.6% in 2022. Lebanon's age-distribution profile is somewhere between the regional average and that of the more developed regions of the world.

2.2 System overview

Career guidance in Lebanon plays a crucial role in helping individuals navigate their educational and professional paths, especially in a country facing economic instability and limited job opportunities. The system has evolved over the years, primarily within the context of educational reforms and workforce development initiatives, with significant input from international organizations.

Institutional Framework

Career guidance is generally offered in Lebanon through educational institutions like schools and universities, as well as vocational and technical education centers (TVET). However, public schools and university have limited formal structures for career guidance. Most services are concentrated in private institutions and NGOs.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) oversees education policy, but career guidance initiatives often require external support and coordination with other governmental bodies.

Most leading universities, particularly private ones like the American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanese American University (LAU), and Université Saint-Joseph (USJ), have dedicated Career Services Offices (CSOs). These offices offer students a range of services, including:

- Career counselling and coaching.
- Workshops and seminars on job search strategies, resume writing, and interview skills.
- Internship placements and job fairs connecting students with employers.
- Career portals and platforms for students to search for job opportunities.

The public Lebanese University (LU) is less resourced compared to private institutions and lacks formal career services or has more limited offerings.

Integration with scholastic and academic programmes

Some schools and universities integrate career guidance into their curricula, offering students the opportunity to work on career planning and development during their years in schools or their degree programmes.

Internships and work-integrated learning opportunities are encouraged, with students gaining practical experience as part of their requirements in certain fields that deserve practical and hands-on experience.

The MEHE's Department of Orientation and Pedagogical Supervision plays a central role in supporting the delivery of career guidance in schools. It helps educators guide students on academic and career paths, despite all the constraints in terms of resources, training, and systemic challenges.

Career guidance is often integrated into broader educational counselling efforts, but the focus can be sometimes inconsistent across regions and schools.

Challenges and gaps

Political and Economic Instability and country context

- The country's instability creates an uncertain environment for students and especially for university graduates and severely limit job prospects, leading to high unemployment rates among young people. As a result, career guidance often emphasizes resilience and flexibility, with students being encouraged to pursue opportunities abroad or in sectors less affected by the country's economic crisis. This makes career guidance even more essential but difficult to implement effectively.
- Limited Infrastructure: career guidance in public schools remains underdeveloped, with insufficient access to trained counsellors and resources.
- Limited Resources in the Public University: career services in the public university are often underfunded and understaffed. Despite this challenge all students in the country can access career guidance services.
- Brain Drain: due to limited local opportunities, many Lebanese youths are encouraged to seek careers abroad, creating a pressing need for international career guidance and mobility services.
- Mismatch with Labour Market Needs: there is often a disconnect between vocational and academic programmes and the skills demanded by the labour market. Technical Vocational schools and universities face challenges in aligning their programmes with the dynamic needs of the local and global job markets.

Technology and Digital Tools

- Some universities have adopted digital platforms to offer career guidance services online, which has become particularly important during times of political unrest or economic crisis.
- Online job portals and career development tools are available also for vocational students to support their access to career resources remotely (e.g. IECD PORTAL), broadening their ability to network with potential employers both in Lebanon and internationally.

Opportunities

- Entrepreneurship and Start-ups: given the limited job market, universities are increasingly promoting entrepreneurship. Many career services are emphasizing skills and resources for starting businesses or freelancing. The same applies to technical vocational education but on a different scale, also due to limited knowledge of the labour market opportunities and the younger age of the potential entrepreneur.
- Alumni networks play a significant role in career development at Lebanese universities. Career services often rely on strong alumni connections to help place students in internships, jobs, and networking events.

Reform Efforts

- There have been ongoing efforts to modernize and professionalize career guidance in Lebanon, aligning it with international standards.
- Projects aim to build capacity among teachers and counsellors, improve tools for labour market information, and create better linkages between the education and employment sectors.

Future Directions

- Enhancing the capacity of career guidance services in both public and private schools as well as universities is essential to cope with the economic difficulties and provide meaningful support to young people.
- Bridging the Skills Gap: schools and universities must work closely with local business and industry to ensure that students possess the skills needed in sectors with growth potential, such as tech, healthcare, agro-food, and renewable energy.
- Further investment in digital career guidance tools could help mitigate some of the access issues, especially in rural and underserved areas. Expanding opportunities for virtual job fairs can help reach a larger number of students, particularly those who are unable to attend physical events due to instability or financial constraints.
- Stronger collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and governmental agencies is needed to align career guidance with labour market needs, particularly in sectors that have potential for growth.

The Career Guidance Policies and Practices in Lebanon can be summarized as follows:

1. Education Sector

- The schools (both general and vocational) and universities provide some forms of career counselling services, though the quality can vary. Some institutions especially universities have dedicated career offices or counsellors.
- Some TVET schools have the function of Guidance Employment Officers at disposal of students and families, while in general education (starting from 8th grade) a similar role is under development.
- Career education is sometimes integrated into the curriculum, focusing on career awareness and planning.
- Collaborations with external organizations and businesses for career workshops, internships, and job fairs is expanding.

2. Employment Sector

- The National Employment Office (NEO) conducts studies and research to set up an employment policy in Lebanon and find job opportunities for applicants through the employment bureau for the purpose of reducing the rate of unemployment. It is a public institution.
- Various programmes and initiatives focus on enhancing job-seeking skills and providing vocational training, often in collaboration with international organizations.
- Many companies at the private level, offer internship and training programmes aimed at improving job readiness and providing career advice.

3. Youth Sector

- Organizations such as the Lebanese Red Cross and various NGOs provide career guidance and training programmes tailored to youth, focusing on job readiness and skill development. This type of training increased after COVID and the financial crisis in Lebanon.
- Programmes aimed at integrating young people into the workforce, such as youth employment initiatives and entrepreneurship support are in place.
- Workshops and seminars are conducted to provide career advice and vocational training to young people.

4. Social Inclusion Sector

- Special programmes are designed to assist marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including refugees and individuals with disabilities, in finding employment and career guidance. ShareQ NGO is a great example to be given.
- Partnerships with local and international NGOs to provide targeted career support and training programmes.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

This section outlines the legal framework for career development support, in particular related to system level: coordination and cooperation, service provision, funding, access to services, use of technology and quality assurance. It provides relevant information regarding the existence of capacity at system level, clear mandate and operational framework for the development of career development activities along the life course.

Lebanese legal tools including rules, policies, and strategies for realization, provision of services, financing, accessing services, delivery of technology, and quality assurance mechanisms.

Nation Wide Strategies and Policies

In Lebanon, career guidance policies are not highly standardized at the national level. Instead, they tend to be shaped by individual institutions, particularly universities, NGOs, and international organizations. While there is no comprehensive national career guidance policy, there are ongoing efforts, particularly through collaborations with international organisations to strengthen career guidance across education levels. To be highlighted is the effort made by DOPS under the Ministry of Education (MEHE) and the Directorate General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVTE) in putting career guidance high on the reform agenda.

The National Employment Office (NEO) is by law the only institution that is allowed to provide labour intermediation services. It is primarily responsible for employment-related policymaking, job matching and placement through its employment offices. However, it does not have the human and technical capabilities to adequately perform this task.

Regulatory Framework

Several laws and regulations formalize and standardize career development support services in Lebanon and different legal frameworks and regulations have been created and universalized in order to enhance the career development support services in Lebanon.

Law on Higher Education (2002): universities ought to incorporate the industry in the provision of services such as career advice or counselling.

TVET Law (2019): the job orientation is integrated with TVET courses to ultimately get the labour force talented in the current job markets' demands.

Employment Promotion Law (2017): develops a platform where employees can receive career counselling and the opportunity to be entrepreneurs is availed.

Standards and Quality Assurance

The Ministry of Education has developed the Lebanon five-year general education plan for 2021 – 2025, that builds on successes and lessons learned from previous programmes and plans. This five-year Plan for General Education forms part of a government-wide effort to transform Lebanon.

To contribute to this transformation, the education system is guided by an ambitious vision for the future of the Lebanese education sector. It has been formulated considering the overall socio-economic development vision of the country, and its international commitments in education (SDG 4) with special attention to reduce vulnerabilities (gender, disabilities, Special Education Needs) and to strengthen citizenship values. The Plan emphasises:

- good quality education for all;

- providing young people with the skills they will need in the 21st century;
- contributing to rebuild the country and its economy.

For TVET, in 2018, the Lebanese government launched and adopted the National Strategic Framework (NSF) for TVET 2018-2022, which has been the main policy document for TVET in recent years. Although the framework represented an important step towards better collaboration between government institutions and stronger partnerships with the private sector, it was not fully operationalised for several reasons, including the overall difficult situation in Lebanon.

In the meantime, a new NSF is being prepared with the timeframe 2024-2029 under the lead of the Directorate General for VET in cooperation with UNICEF, the ILO, GIZ and IECD.

Currently, quality assurance in VET focuses primarily on accrediting providers against criteria largely relating to school infrastructure and the like, rather than on improving provision and qualifications. The new National Strategic Framework for TVET – currently being finalised – does, however, call for a more holistic QA system.

Coordination and Collaboration

According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) National Strategic Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2018–2022, there are no common priorities for TVET as there is a lack of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to harmonize practices, define priorities and learn from progress.

Plans for future reforms or measures

Digital Career Guidance Platforms: Introduction of online platforms such as e-Guidance systems by NEO and improving opportunities to learn about careers and interact with career counsellors.

Entrepreneurship Programmes: Promote CENTER MINE's projects of entrepreneurship, including training, and mentorship.

Capacity Building for Career Counsellors: Continuous professional development programs of this nature will mean that counsellors get the skills and knowledge needed to tackle any challenges.

4. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

This section highlights aspects related to formal coordination, strategic leadership, governance and cooperation between stakeholders.

4.1 Promoting coordination, cooperation, and good governance

Jobs fairs are organized annually by all the universities in Lebanon with the collaboration of a large number of companies. Examples include: the annual job fair at the American University of Beirut (AUB) normally takes place in the spring semester of each year. It is considered the biggest event on campus when it comes to career placement and hiring and normally brings a large number of top local, regional and multinational employers, all seeking to attract and hire talented AUB students and graduates. The LAU Career Fair brings together employers from different industries to present their companies/organizations. At the Lebanese University, the job fair is considered as one of the extraordinary activities due to the importance of orientation towards university majors suitable for the aspirations of the Lebanese youth and determining their future scientific, professional and social path.

Other examples are:

- The Lebanese University organizes job fairs for students in its technical and vocational institutes. These events focus on industries like engineering, information technology, automotive, electrical, and mechanical trades.
- The Beirut Arab University (BAU) Vocational Training Institute organizes job fairs for its vocational students, focusing on trades like plumbing, carpentry, automotive maintenance, and computer repair.
- The Antonine University Technical Institute holds job fairs targeting industries like electrical installation, HVAC systems, welding, and industrial electronics.

Job fairs for vocational students in Lebanon serve as essential platforms to connect technical and vocational education and training (TVET) students with employers. These events aim to bridge the gap between vocational education and the labour market, providing students with employment opportunities, internships, and practical insights into industries relevant to their skills. Several organisations as IECD, Chamber of Commerce, UNDP, ILO and other bodies organise job fairs, mostly at school and local level. Some examples are:

- Various Chambers of Commerce in Lebanon, especially those in Beirut and Tripoli, regularly host job fairs aimed at connecting vocational students with companies in industrial and agricultural sectors.
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with local NGOs and vocational training institutions, frequently organize job fairs as part of broader employment and capacity-building projects.
- Some job fairs are sector-specific, focusing on industries such as automotive, hospitality, and IT, where vocational skills are in high demand.
- Many NGOs working in Lebanon, particularly those engaged in economic development and youth employment, organize job fairs targeting vocational students. These fairs often focus on soft skills training, career counselling, and direct recruitment.

4.2 Key civil society stakeholders

The Education Development Centre (EDC) is a global nonprofit that advances lasting solutions to improve education, promote health, and expand economic opportunity. EDC is actually implementing USAID's five-year [Higher Education Capacity Development \(HECD\) program](#). HECD supports [Lebanese HEIs](#) in improving their administrative, academic, and job readiness capacity to better prepare graduates for employment and success in the labour market.

The Makassed Islamic Philanthropic Association is a leading 'mid-private' provider of education in Lebanon and operates both schools and vocational training institutions - the latter including a technical institute and a school of nursing. It has a policy on careers education at classroom level from pre-school level up.

There are also NGOs that provide career guidance services. The Waznat Group, for instance, is a major actor. It has connections with over 100 schools and trains careers counsellors who offer careers and higher education information and counselling to upper secondary students. Another player is INJAZ, an affiliate of Junior Achievement Worldwide, which focuses mainly on the development of business-related and entrepreneurial skills among high school and university students.

ILO conducted a community-based market assessment in seven vulnerable regions of Lebanon: Chtoura and surroundings; Halba and surroundings; Wadi-Khaled; Minieh and Donnieh; North Beqaa (Hermel, Qaa, Labweh); Saida; and Marjeyoun and Hasbaya. It was developed in collaboration with eight UNICEF partners (ANERA, Rene Moawad Foundation, Akkar Network for Development, Leb Relief, LOST, DoTrust, AVSI) and it followed ILO's TREE methodology (Training for Rural Economic Empowerment). The activity enabled collaboration among a wide group of stakeholders.

5. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

This aim of this section is to identify the main career guidance services provided to individuals and groups.

Support to career guidance initiated in the ETF-GEMM regional project in 2014 and 2015 and continued all along these years, with expansion in 2022 to the general secondary education (starting from 8th grade). Over the years, the ETF has continued its work and support to the set up and operationalization of existing and new GEOs in TVET by scaling up this initiative to around 40 schools, putting a great effort for the sustainability of this initiative and for the consolidation of the GEOs network. A Guidance and Employment Manual was developed by IECD and ETF under the supervision of the DGVTE. This Manual aims to provide concrete tools for schools and local partners to support them in the establishment of career guidance services dedicated to young people in vocational schools in Lebanon.

This experience of career guidance in TVET has shown the possibility of setting up career guidance opportunities at school level for students by i) creating a dedicated function within the school, ii) offering capacity building to relevant staff to deliver good orientation services, and iii) establishing fruitful connections with the local labour market and the local communities.

The support of the DGVTE has been instrumental to scale up this initiative in TVET at national level and to develop a system that is now transferred to general education building upon all the work previously done by relevant departments of MEHE in the field (e.g. DOPS). In particular, in the area of general education, the ETF is following up in close cooperation with MEHE relevant orientation activities at school and system level. This has included the development of the Manual for Career Guidance Officers (CGO) including practical exercises from lower grades (8th and 9th grades) and dedicate advice on setting up of career and counselling functions that will continue with piloting of the Manual in schools.

5.1. Education, training and work-based learning for youth

The government education system is modelled on the French system. The public sector school system exhibits strong central control by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which is responsible for, amongst other things, teacher certification, curricula, textbooks and the official examinations. The school system is of the 6:3:3 type (6 years primary, 3 years lower secondary and 3 years upper secondary) with an examination filter at the end of the lower secondary part of the cycle (i.e. after 9th Grade) and a terminating examination at the end of the upper secondary part of the cycle. These examinations commonly remain referred to as the Brevet and Baccalauréat (or Terminale) respectively although the names of the resultant certificates were Arabicised almost 20 years ago.

The private sector at both school and university level is a prominent feature of the Lebanese educational landscape. Government control over the private education industry is weak (Nahas, 2010), although there is some degree of control over private schooling through the requirement that Lebanese students take courses leading to the Lebanese official examinations unless exempted by virtue of having received prior schooling outside Lebanon.

There are both Francophone and Anglophone private schools, and some that deliver the curriculum to parallel French and English classes. The elite Francophone high schools offer both the French and Lebanese Baccalauréat, which are officially regarded as equivalent.

The private sector includes so-called 'mid-private schools' which offer subsidised fees to poorer clients. Some of the organisations that operate these schools also offer technical/vocational education. In Lebanon, the purpose of upper secondary schooling is to make the transition to tertiary education; the rate of transition from schooling to formal employment is extremely low (Vlaardingerbroek, Dallal,

Rizkallah, & Rabah, 2007). There are more than 40 universities in Lebanon, although many of these would better be called colleges than universities. The largest, accounting for roughly half of all university admissions, is the national Université Libanaise; the remainder are private institutions.

With respect to the school education system, the obvious junctures at which career orientation is needed are in 9th Grade (continuing with academic schooling or entering technical/vocational), and then for those remaining in the mainstream school system in 10th -Grade (orientation towards science-intensive or non-science-intensive track), and 11th Grade (which specific track to enter in 12th Grade). In the technical/vocational education system, guidance is needed in the first year of the Baccalauréat Technique (occupational major), as a significant proportion of students repeat the first year because they want to change their major.

Vlaardingerbroek and El-Masri (2008) reported that upper secondary students tended to present a narrow range of careers when asked about their prospects with 'conventional' occupations such as engineering, medical and teaching being the norm. The main source of careers information to emerge in this study was parents, with schools and teachers in second place; teachers in this context were acting mostly as individuals and not as members of any formal guidance network. Access to employment opportunities is also constrained by *wasta* – the Lebanese version of 'It's not what you know but who you know'. Mogharbel (2012) reported that social factors outweighed cognitive variables as contributors to high school student career indecision with the main ones being perceived as social barriers and parental support (pp. 73–74).

A 1962 decree placed the onus for career guidance on the school inspectorate.

This was followed by a 1972 decree which established a department for career guidance services within the Ministry of Education. A small number of teachers were trained as career guidance officers. A 1979 decree established a National Employment Office which was intended to provide a career guidance service, but this endeavour never amounted to much in practice. Decrees in 1996 and 1997 laid the foundations for career guidance units in the technical/vocational directorate and the College of Education of the national university but the translation of these decrees into substantive services faltered. Career guidance came into the spotlight in the 2002 national education strategy but in practice it was too little; indeed, a World Bank technical/vocational education project with a related focus on career guidance was cancelled two years later.

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in Lebanon plays a critical role in the country's education landscape, aiming to equip students with the technical and practical skills needed for various industries. The system is managed primarily by the Directorate-General for Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE), which falls under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).

Lebanon's VET system consists of formal and non-formal education and training programmes, ranging from short-term certificates to longer diploma programmes with a strong focus on sectors such as engineering, information technology, hospitality, construction, and healthcare.

Levels of VET Education

Secondary VET Programmes

- Students can enter vocational education after completing the basic education cycle (9th Grade). These programmes typically last three years and culminate in the **Brevet Professionnel (BP) or Baccalaureate Technique (BT)**.
- **BT Programmes:** focus on a mix of general education and technical subjects, preparing students for roles in industries like information technology, mechanics, hospitality, and tourism.
- **BP Programmes:** these are more hands-on and practical, often targeting trades such as carpentry, plumbing, and automotive maintenance.

Higher VET Programmes

- After completing the BT, students can pursue **Technical Baccalaureate (TS)** or **Higher Technical Diploma (HTS) programmes**. These are two-to-three-year programmes that provide more specialized training in fields like industrial electronics, civil engineering, business management, and healthcare.
- These diplomas can also serve as a pathway to university education.

Dual Vocational Education and Training (Dual VET)

- A more recent development that combines classroom learning with on-the-job training in partnership with private companies. This model seeks to improve the employability of students by giving them practical experience during their studies.

Non-Formal VET

- Lebanon's VET system also includes non-formal education, particularly for youth who may have dropped out of school. These programmes are often short-term and focused on immediate job placement in industries that require skilled labour but not formal education credentials.

With regard to Work Based Learning (WBL), despite the effort of the international community, Lebanon (excluding the Vocational Secondary Certificate (LP) – dual system lacks structured WBL schemes that can be applied at national level.

As for Lebanon's broader VET system, there are numerous challenges associated with apprenticeships. It is difficult to keep teachers up to date with new technological developments in their fields. Companies lack qualified trainers who can create links between theory-based education offered at VET schools and practical training provided by firms. These two key components of the apprenticeship system create serious gaps in training.

Another important challenge is the relatively low cost of employing foreign workers in Lebanese companies, which leads employers to prefer to hire foreigners over Lebanese workers, thereby diminishing the offer for WBL placements.

A significant improvement with regard to WBL, including in terms of the link between the private and public sector, is the MoU signed between the DGVTE/Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Industry to provide students with internship opportunities and potentially help to create jobs. This MoU, whilst supporting the monitoring of the TVET system, will also take advantage of the technical school in Kab Elias's involvement in the initiative taking place in the food industry (NNA 2023).

In general, starting in secondary school, universities organize open days to guide students towards various majors, with a focus on the most in-demand fields. These events typically take place annually around April, before the end of the academic year. In higher education, most universities, both public and private, have career centers. These centers host annual job fairs where leading companies visit universities, introduce their areas of activity, and collect applications from students interested in internships. This helps students explore career opportunities. Other than the job fairs, some universities like LAU and AUB organize a summer camp where students explore different careers. This activity is done annually as well during summer for a couple of days.

Among the courses at universities, 'internship' is one course like any other. Students are obliged to look for an internship in a company related to their major. A report should be written after the internship describing the industry and its evolution over the years, the PESTEL, history of the company and in a second part, and details of the internship.

In adult and learning education, we can see a new trend growing in Lebanon for career coaching.

The ESCWA has developed the Skills Monitor to understand the region's labor market demand and track the relevance of skills and employment prospects (see: <https://skillsmonitor.unescwa.org/>).

Despite all the career guidance being offered, there are still high rates of unemployment, youth not being able to find the career path they want because of low salaries, high numbers of graduates and very few job opportunities on the market due to the overall critical situation that the country is facing.

Formal career guidance begins in 9th Grade at which point some students may opt for the vocational track. Career guidance occurs in 10th–12th Grades in the form of presentations by alumni and visits to universities or by university personnel.

Some universities make real efforts to establish career centres to help students in their search for work and increase their chances of finding a job. This may be provided to students in different formats, namely by direct access to career centres where information is available, and where counselling can be offered. It may include information events in which lectures and printed materials are distributed, job fairs where students are put in direct contact with the world of business and enterprises, visits to enterprises to introduce students to the world of work, and finding internships for students.

In TVET education, career guidance at school level is offered to students and parents in a selected number of schools through the Guidance and Employment Office (GEO) and GEO Officer. Mainly, the GEO is responsible for the students' orientation before they start their vocational training and education, and then the responsibility shifts to monitoring students' growth both on a personal and professional level. More specifically, a GEO is responsible for the promotion of the guidance services, mainly through the participation in fairs and visits of academic schools, as well as informing all students in their current school about the services provided by the office. In addition to promotion, and as the name suggests, career guidance is the main objective of a GEO through activities such as employment interviews, informing students about job opportunities and helping them enhance their CV.

In general education, career guidance at school level will be soon offered to students and parents through the Role of the Career Guidance Focal Point (CGFP), a dedicated professional member of the school's community of specialists. The Focal Point's mission is to efficiently create, implement, and review career counselling and guidance programmes that support students' needs. Collaboration with internal and external stakeholders such as the School Director, parents, and universities is a cornerstone of the CGFP's work to help students achieve their full potential. The role of the CGFP is currently under development and will be soon put in place in a selected number of school by the DOPS, Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

5.2 Unemployed and NEETs

According to the Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey Update carried out in 2022, the youth unemployment rate increased to 47.8%, from 23.3% in 2018-2019. According to the available data, 29.6% of unemployed young people had been seeking employment for 2 years or more and 19.2% for 1 to 2 years (ILO, CAS 2022). Moreover, the percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) was 29.1% in 2022. This percentage was higher for young women (32.1%) than for young men (26.1%).

The National Employment Office (NEO) lacks the basic infrastructure to enable its staff to work properly, and the general types of labour market policies and measures, such as employment mediation, career counselling and guidance, employment stimulation and entrepreneurship incentives, are still fragmented and often linked to individual projects, supported by international community (ETF, Key policy developments in education, training and employment, 2023). No comprehensive datasets regarding beneficiaries of such services are available in Lebanon, therefore it is difficult to document the access of jobseekers to career guidance and counselling. In general, all UN, EU and other donors' funded projects targeting jobseekers and vulnerable population groups include elements of career orientation, guidance, skills assessment and development.

The opportunities for young people to find employment have become scarce in Lebanon due to prologued crises. There is great need among younger generation to receive career guidance services. The intensified competition over low-paid jobs or in informal sectors further increases vulnerability.

Young people from a foreign background have little to no belief in the Lebanese education system and what it has to offer and always prefer to start working at an early age to make ends meet instead of continuing their studies. This is exacerbated by the general tendency (supported in some cases by the legal rules on jobs for refugees) of low-skilled jobs being offered only to foreigners and not to Lebanese people. The career guidance services offered to NEETs are mostly offered by NGOs or local organizations as data on NEETs are often difficult to collect.

5.3 Workers / Employed

In Lebanon, career guidance services for workers and employed individuals are relatively underdeveloped compared to those for students. However, some services are available through various initiatives, particularly those focusing on career development, upskilling, and reskilling:

- Some NGOs and international organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), offer career counselling and guidance services for employees in vulnerable sectors. These services include workshops, career assessments, and advice on transitioning to other industries or sectors.
- A few private companies offer in-house career development programmes for their employees. This includes leadership training, mentorship programmes, and career counselling aimed at fostering internal mobility or personal growth.
- The Chambers of Commerce, particularly the Chamber of Commerce of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, organize a variety of activities for their members. These include numerous awareness-raising programmes aimed at emphasizing the advantages of investing in employee training and promoting open corporate cultures. Additionally, these programmes offer valuable insights into future job opportunities, focusing on modern workplace tasks, evolving organizational structures, digitalization, and more. Some vocational institutions offer evening or part-time training programmes for employed individuals seeking to enhance their skills or pivot their careers. These programmes often come with career guidance components, such as advice on career pathways or emerging job opportunities.
- International Organizations often support Lebanon in developing career guidance initiatives (mostly projects based) that could eventually address workers, though the focus is typically on youth and vulnerable groups.
- Some international donor-funded programmes provide career guidance as part of broader workforce development efforts. These may focus on upskilling or transitioning into new industries, particularly for workers in unstable sectors like construction or agriculture.

In principle, the National Employment Office (NEO) should provide basic career counselling and job placement services. Although mainly targeting job seekers, some services should be available for employed individuals looking to change careers or upskill. Given the difficult situation in which the NEO operates, it is difficult to report on the services offered in this field.

To sum up, while career guidance for employed individuals in Lebanon exists, it is largely fragmented and limited in scope, and more formal, widespread systems need to be developed to support workers comprehensively.

6. FUNDING

In Lebanon, various institutions are responsible for financing and managing funds related to career development services. However, the biggest difficulties that Lebanon is facing in terms of financing career development services stem from complex crises and conflicts at various levels and the financial crisis of the government. The main institutions include the following:

- Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE): oversees allocation of approving budgets for career guidance in schools and colleges.
- Ministry of Labour: funds employment-related career guidance services.
- National Employment Office: covers the budgets of employment programmes for the general public, including career guidance.

Costs and Expenditure Related to Career Guidance

1. Career Guidance in Education

Teachers and Experts: costs include salaries for teachers with guidance roles as an add-on to their regular salary and employment of one or more experts, full time or part time. The economic reason stands as a barrier for most teachers to receive fair pay for the additional time that they spend as counsellors. In contrast, for Guidance Employment Officers in TVET schools and Career Guidance Focal Points in general education schools, no additional salary is foreseen for staff performing these roles, as they are already part of their full-time positions, with 50% of their time allocated to these responsibilities. However, to maintain staff motivation and effectiveness in these roles, it is important to consider offering incentives and capacity-building opportunities.

2. Infrastructure and Resources

Overheads, e.g. leased internet connections, PCs, laptops, dedicated rooms, webpages, online services, guidance materials, and assessment tools are also catered for. This is usually the case because these resources are often underfunded and inconsistency in terms of support across institutions is also an issue which arises in the majority of cases.

3. Cooperation with Enterprises

Expenses to be covered would include those for setting up internships, arranging travel for teachers to various industries, and the involvement of teachers in placement visits to industries. Peripheral funding usually encumbers interest in clubs.

4. Career Days/Open Days

Apart from lecture halls, arranging career or open days incur costs, which sometimes are not covered by the school budget.

5. Career Guidance for Adults

Outreach to Vulnerable Groups: costs include outsourcing to the NGOs and acquiring offline options and purchasing diagnostic tools. Since the necessary financial injections for these services tend to be overshadowed, many of them are limited in terms of their reach and effectiveness.

6. Guidance Practitioners

The public employment services are, unfortunately, faced with a limited number of career guidance practitioners caused by budget cuts. This category of personnel will require on-going training and mentorship for them to produce best results.

7. Data on Expenditure

Funding Sources and Incentives

1. Government Funding

- Earmarked Funding: funding from central government is scanty for career information and guidance services at various levels of schooling and public job sector. Budget allocations often go towards other areas, leaving more immediate services uncovered.
- Levy-Based Funds: an important note is that there are no training funds on national or sectoral level based on levies for career guidance.

2. Private Sector and Clients Income Sources

- Enterprise Contributions: few corporations tackle the expenses of career education through training and internships. Even if they are not direct funds, logistic assistance is considered the most valuable.
- Client Participation: little investor involvement hinders running counselling services for career growth. Charges for services only exist in special cases and are not spread over wide areas.
- The Central Bank in Lebanon issued the Circular 331 on 22 August 2013, with the purpose of improving the Lebanese eco-system along with stimulation for investments in start-up companies, and raising hope for entrepreneurs. In more detail, Circular 331 made the way for entrepreneurs to receive financial support directly from commercial banks or through special venture capital funds. As such, it stipulates that these kinds of investments made by a bank will get a funding and a loss guarantee up to 75% of the investments. At the same time, profits are split between the participating banks and the central bank equally.²

3. Financial incentives

- Voucher Schemes and Incentives: the resources and financial benefits offered to individuals and organizations for career benefit training are insufficient. Scantly implemented vouchers and providing avenues to combine career development into HR practices is seldom unveiled.
- Inter-Ministry Cost Sharing: Lebanon funds are shared between different ministries and the efficiency of allocation is questionable. As a result, the overall budget might lack clear priorities and fail to address the complete range of needs across different sectors or ministries in a coordinated manner.

4. Fund management

- Provider Capacity: some service providers lack such ability to adequately oversee the funds and are subsequently unable to provide quality services.

Barriers

- Financial Constraints: the economic crises lead to the recurring underfunding of programmes for career guidance that curtails their impact and renders services insufficient.
- Lack of Data: a lack of in-depth figures on outlay and funding shortfalls might obstruct proper planning and allocation.
- Fragmented Funding Sources: relying on different (uncoordinated) funding sources leads to ineffectiveness and inefficiencies in service delivery.

Enablers

- International Donors and Projects: although international donors and projects are crucial in terms of financing, accessing and managing the funds is not easy.

² Accessed on 01/10/2024: <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/39961/bdl-circular-331-as-a-local-opportunity-for-lebanese-talent-an-update/>

- **Public-Private Partnerships:** expanding the efforts of partnerships with the private sector will enrich the availability of resources as well as improve the quality of services.
- **NGO Involvement:** the non-governmental organizations operate as a bridge between the vulnerable groups and comprise a parallel mechanism for government efforts.

Opportunities

- **Leveraging Technology:** utilising digital systems and technologies can support a more effective way of delivering career guidance services, e.g. by providing increased access.
- **Policy Integration:** a single national plan for strengthening careers could enhance effectiveness, and financial efficiency.
- **Capacity Building:** capacity boosting of practitioners and providers through training and support will guarantee financial efficiency by greatly enhancing service delivery.

Funding for career development services in Lebanon is constrained by financial limitations and coordination challenges. Addressing these issues through international donor support, private sector engagement, and improved fund management practices is essential for enhancing career guidance services. A unified national strategy, better data collection, and capacity building are critical steps towards a more effective and sustainable career development support system.

7. ACCESS, DELIVERY AND QUALITY OF CAREER GUIDANCE

7.1 Access to career development services

In Lebanon, access to career guidance is supported by multiple projects, agendas and programmes introducing the concept of career guidance to people (mostly students) independent of their status - mostly through international projects and funds. In this section, the measures are outlined which aim to broaden the access to the support for career development services, such as outreach, measures that target vulnerable groups as well as the development of the infrastructure and digital services.

1. Outreach Initiatives for Hard-to-Access Groups

Lebanon has adopted various outreach services to ensure that disadvantaged groups have easy access to career development support, including people in isolated regions, inactive ones, and those working in informal fields. This service is offered by universities, international projects and NGOs, but not through government policies.

2. Targeted Interventions for Vulnerable Populations

Particular efforts have been made by universities and NGOs and international organisations to facilitate the timely professional support for the most vulnerable groups by providing customized support.

- Geographically Isolated Individuals: mobile units and community centres not only cater to the residents in remote areas but also offer assistance in career counselling and training.
- Long-Term Unemployed and Inactive Individuals: these programmes have been designed to serve ex-offenders by conducting job readiness workshops, vocational training, and counselling services to help them get back on their feet.
- NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training): special projects including youth centers and outreach programmes have been designed to re-engage NEETs through education and training.
- Migrants and Refugees: targeted services such as language courses, cultural integration programmes, and job placement services help migrants and refugees in their adaptation.
- Women: support in the form of women's career centers offer tailored support including empowerment training and flexible jobs.
- Inmates: prison rehabilitation programmes, which comprise both vocational training and career counselling, help inmates to adjust to the society after their release.
- Persons with disabilities: through individualized guidance rendered in the accessibility-oriented career centers, career advisory services are now readily accessible and available to all.

3. Multi-channeled distance services

- Online Counselling and Webinars: virtual career counselling sessions and online workshops enable people to join the programme from anywhere.
- Telephone Hotlines: hotlines for career advice are provided to those who do not have ready and immediate access to internet.

4. Accessibility and Adaptability of Support

- Digital Literacy Training: online programmes are accessible which can be used to learn the digital skills needed for accessing career development services online.
- Tailored Support Services: the aim of career centers is to adopt a tailored approach during the process of in-depth assessment in order to meet the specific needs of individuals.

5. Provider and Practitioner Capacity

- Professional Development: constant training for career counsellors enables them to be resourceful when it comes to assisting different client groups.
- Inclusive Practices: incorporation of an inclusive policy and sensitization training for the staff to ensure that they treat all clients with courtesy and respect.

6. Provision of Career Development Support

- Integration with Social Services: social welfare programmes integrated with career counselling support persons with career guidance.
- Educational Entitlements: there is a right to career counselling services for students in public schools and at colleges as part of their educational path.

Barriers

- Geographic Isolation: people residing in remote places have an accessibility problem.
- Digital Divide: limited availability of the internet and low digital skills of some people make the internet services less effective.
- Resource Constraints: inadequate funding and resources can keep the scale and quality of career development programmes from being better.

Enablers

Policy Support: appropriate policy frameworks and national strategies help construct a stable ground for the expansion of career development services.

Public-Private Partnerships: partnering between the government, private sector and NGOs extends and improves the quality of the services.

Technological Advancements: along with the increasing number of digital tools and platforms, career guidance becomes more accessible to everyone.

Opportunities

- Expansion of Digital Services: the digital infrastructure and training investment could help overcome the digital divide and expand the career development support coverage.
- Enhanced Coordination: improving coordination among stakeholders will enhance service delivery and allow for effective resource utilization.
- International Collaboration: innovative approaches to career development in Lebanon could be facilitated by integrating international prevailing practices and partnerships.

By addressing the barriers and leveraging the enablers and opportunities, Lebanon could enhance access to career development support for all individuals, ensuring that even the most vulnerable populations are empowered to achieve their career aspirations.

7.2. Use of technology in the delivery of career guidance

Based on a study on ICT-assisted career guidance: a case study in a public school in Beirut, researchers were able to conclude that ICTs possess the potential of leveraging students' benefits from career guidance programmes administered at schools. This study involved one public school in Beirut, Lebanon. All 11th Grade students from all the three sections available at this school (N= 106) comprised the sample. The selection of this school was made based on the willingness of its principal to take part in the study. In fact, one of the researchers was involved in training a sample of public school principals from Beirut (11 principals) and Mount Lebanon (12 principals). The aim was to examine the impact of using ICT tools in carrying out career guidance for eleventh graders.

Results show that ICT seem to have offered quick and cost-effective solution to students' needs in the domain of career orientation and guidance. The ICT-assisted career guidance programme has proven to support students to learn better about their personal interest, potential, their optimum work conditions, and their intolerable work environments. It has also helped them enhance their skills at making more informed decisions and to acquire deeper understanding of careers, and hence supported them in arriving at a smaller number of choices for future career choices. While this study did not offer any information about the means via which ICT supported students in achieving that, the literature would benefit from a qualitative study that examines the intervention itself. This study has shown that the ICT-assisted career guidance intervention programme left less impact on students in terms of considering their parents and friends as the most reliable sources for advising on future careers. Similarly, it was least bold in terms of linking their choices to the labour market. These findings should not be related to the nature of ICT-assisted career guidance programmes, but rather to the design of the career guidance programme utilized in school in the first place.

The funds needed to invest in ICT for career guidance seem to be the greatest barrier. However, in Lebanon, several platforms provide job search and career guidance services, targeting different sectors and needs. Here are some of the key platforms:

- **Daleel Madani** – A platform for NGOs, development, and humanitarian work, providing job opportunities and career resources in these fields.
- **Bayt.com** – A popular job portal in the MENA region, including Lebanon. It offers job listings, career advice, and guidance on building a resumé and interview preparation.
- **HireLebanese** – A job search platform focusing on connecting Lebanese talents with employers. It provides both local and international job opportunities.
- **Foras Online** – A job search platform providing employment opportunities in various sectors across Lebanon. It also offers career guidance tips and tools to enhance job seekers' skills.
- **Glassdoor Lebanon** – Known for job listings and company reviews, Glassdoor also provides career guidance, salary insights, and interview tips.

These platforms offer a mix of job opportunities, career development tools, and industry insights, making them essential resources for job seekers and professionals in Lebanon.

7.3. Quality of provision of career development support services

This section analyses aspects which contribute to raising and maintaining the quality of provision, including the definition of standards of service and ethical treatment of personal information, professionalization and training of practitioners and other staff, quality of tools, methodologies and information.

Standards

In Lebanon, there are currently no formalized or universally adopted quality standards for career guidance practitioners at the national level. However, several institutions and organizations working in career guidance and vocational training have been developing their own frameworks and capacity-building programmes aimed at enhancing the skills of guidance counsellors.

General overview of the situation:

- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) oversees educational and career guidance initiatives, particularly through vocational schools and public education. However, there are no detailed national quality standards for career guidance counsellors, though there are efforts to incorporate guidance within educational policies.
- International Organizations are active in career guidance reform in Lebanon. These bodies have helped in training counsellors and education professionals in basic career guidance competencies, but these are often project-based and do not lead to official accreditation or quality standards.
- Some universities and educational institutions are involved in providing career counselling services and training programmes for future counsellors. However, these programmes lack national accreditation or standardization, and the content often depends on the institution's own frameworks and international standards.
- The Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon has been involved in career guidance, particularly for vocational training and employment. They offer training programmes for counsellors, but again, these are not based on any national standard or framework.

While there are no formal national quality standards for career guidance counsellors and practitioners in Lebanon, there are various capacity-building efforts underway. Most initiatives are project-based or linked to international donors and organizations. To establish comprehensive quality standards, Lebanon would need to formalize policies through its educational and labour ministries, working with both local institutions and international bodies.

Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

There are currently no national-level mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating career guidance (CG) policies and services, with most oversight occurring at the school level. In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, the Directorate-General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE) oversees the work and responsibilities of Guidance Employment Officers (GEOs), and reports on annual activities. However, this largely depends on individual initiatives rather than a formalized process.

In general education, once Career Guidance Focal Points (CGFPs) become operational in schools, the Department of Educational Guidance (DOPS) will establish a monitoring mechanism. DOPS, as the unit responsible for career guidance within the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, is already positioned to manage this task.

All other initiatives related to Evaluation and Monitoring are led by NGOs or donor activities and refer to a short period after the closing of programmes related to career guidance.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Conclusions

Career guidance services in education in Lebanon are mainly provided by various international organizations, universities, and educational institutions. These organizations train counsellors and education professionals in basic career guidance competencies, but these efforts are often project-based and lack official accreditation or quality standards. Universities and educational institutions offer career counselling services and training programmes for future counsellors, yet these programmes are not nationally accredited or standardized and depend on each institution's frameworks and international standards.

The Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in Lebanon plays a significant role in career guidance, especially in vocational training and employment sectors. They offer training programmes for counsellors, but similar to education, these programmes are not based on any national standards or frameworks.

There are no formal national quality standards for career guidance counsellors and practitioners in Lebanon. Various capacity-building efforts are underway, mostly project-based or linked to international donors and organizations. To establish comprehensive quality standards, Lebanon would need to formalize policies through its education and labour ministries, working with local institutions and international bodies. Formalizing policies and establishing national standards are necessary to improve the quality and consistency of services.

There are no national mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating career guidance policies in Lebanon. The vocational education sector is overseen by the Directorate-General of Vocational and Technical Education. In general education, the Department of Educational Guidance will establish monitoring once Career Guidance Focal Points are operational. Other initiatives are led by NGOs or donors and are temporary. Formalized national-level monitoring is absent.

The policy framework needs short-term actions to establish clear roles and responsibilities at the national level. Medium-term actions should include developing coordination between public and private sectors. Long-term goals would involve creating a comprehensive quality assurance system.

Coordination and cooperation should be enhanced through national research programmes and promoting a culture of public-private cooperation. Clear mandates and adequate human resources are crucial for providers. Practitioners should have access to continuous professional development.

The services and activities should be aligned with existing needs and supported by quality labour market information. Tools, methodologies, and infrastructure need to be adequate. A client service culture is essential.

Funding should be allocated appropriately to ensure the sustainability of career guidance services. Providers need financial resources to support their mandates. Short-term, medium-term, and long-term funding strategies should be developed.

Way forward

Overall, recommendations for Lebanon's career guidance include developing policies at the system level, such as laws and strategies, improving coordination, and consolidation of quality assurance frameworks. At the provider level, the recommendations focus on clear mandates, adequate resources, and quality labour market information. Practitioner-level recommendations emphasize qualified practitioners and access to professional development. These recommendations should be aligned with national, EU and international support activities, with short-, medium-, and long-term perspectives.

Lebanon's legal framework for career development support demonstrates some strengths, especially for its incorporation of broader policy areas and setting standards and quality assurance measures. Yet, by providing a holistic solution to the identified areas for improvements such as developing a comprehensive national strategy for the career counselling, introducing an inclusive and accessible service, ensuring the sustainable funding, integrating use of technology, strengthening quality assurance, providing coordination among the various stakeholders and supporting the continuous professional development, a robust and effective career development support system can be built.

Areas for Enhancement

1. Comprehensive National Strategy

- **Need for a Unified Strategy:** one national career development support policy is needed to cater for various categories of beneficiaries in a lifelong and inclusive perspective. This would help address current the fragmentation of the career guidance system, the risk of leaving certain groups behind and would pursue a more holistic approach to system development, actors' cooperation and professional development of career guidance practitioners, as well as efficiency gains.

2. Accessibility and Inclusiveness

- **Improved Access:** taking steps to supply career guidance services in the far-flung and remote areas, overcoming geographical limitations, as well as to displaced populations, children, youth and adults.
- **Special Needs Inclusion:** improvement of services to accommodate those with special needs, integration of all in society no matter who they are, and by ensuring equal chances. Particular attention to those with migrant backgrounds as well as persons with learning and work capacity constraints is needed.

3. Funding, Availability of Resources and Allocation

- **Sustainable Funding:** as far as the career guidance centers and services are concerned, the sustainability of funding streams from different sources, both national and international, is a fundamental element.
- **Resource Distribution:** make sure that the benefit of increasing resources is uniformly spread across all regions and no disparity exists between urban and rural areas.

4. Technology Integration

- **Advanced Technological Tools:** investing in advanced technological tools to enhance career guidance services.
- **Digital Literacy Training:** establishing digital literacy training for all counsellors and clients in order to increase technology use.

5. Quality Assurance and Evaluation

- **Sound Monitoring:** establishing an easy to use monitoring system focused on input, process, outputs and outcomes indicators and capacity building in the areas of monitoring and evaluation.
- **Regular Assessments:** enabling the successful implementation of frequent and systematic evaluation, with feedback channels on the career guidance system design.
- **Standardized Metrics:** creation of a unified measurement methodology to evaluate the success of career advancement experimentations.

6. Coordination and Collaboration

- **Strengthened Partnerships:** strengthening partnerships between different ministries, public sector agencies, and private entities, as well as donors and NGOs is essential to overcome current fragmentation and under resourced services.
- **International Collaboration:** involvement in international collaboration that could lead Lebanon to adopting the best practices and implementing suitable new approaches.

7. Professional Development and Training

- **Continuous Training:** offering regular training for career counsellors' professional development.
- **Certification Programmes:** run certification schemes for career counsellors to set a standard and populate the field with qualified professionals.

ABBREVIATIONS

CGFPs	Career Guidance Focal Points
CRDP	Pedagogical Research and Development Centre
DGVTE	Directorate General for Vocational Education and Training
DOPS	Department of Educational Guidance
GEOs	Guidance Employment Officers
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFHLCS	Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MINE	Centre for career, Innovation and Entrepreneurship - Lebanese University
NEO	National Employment Office
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIMED	Mediterranean Universities Union
WBL	Work Based Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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