

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW – SERBIA

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, ETF engaged in reviewing the state of national/state-wide career development support systems in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*¹, 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'².

The review process was led by local experts under the coordination of 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 national language.

The review presented here builds on the factsheet 'Career guidance in Serbia in support of wider employment, employability and education policy goals', developed by the ETF in 2021.

1.1. Context

Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia reports that the estimated number of populations in 2020 was 6 899 126 (the estimations are based on natural changes statistics and population internal migration). Observed by sex, 51.3% were women and 48.7% were men. The depopulation trend continued, meaning that the population growth rate was negative compared with the previous year and amounted to -6.7%. The most significant number of people live in the capital city, Belgrade, 1 694 480 people in 2020³.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

² ETF-ILO (2021): <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/developing-national-career-development-support-systems>

³ [G202113048.pdf \(stat.gov.rs\)](#)

The share of the youth population (age group 15-24) among the working population of 15-65 is decreasing, as it was 18.2 in 2020 in comparison to 20.1 in 2010, indicating that the Serbian population is gradually ageing. Labour migration and depopulation remain some defining features of Serbia's economy and society and a topic that periodically dominates the public debate. It implies shifts in the population structure and, consequently, customer needs.⁴

Compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, the real GDP growth in the third quarter of 2021 amounted to 7.7%. According to seasonally adjusted GDP data, gross domestic product increased by 1.6% in the third quarter of 2021, compared to the previous quarter. Observed by activities, in the third quarter of 2021, compared to the same quarter of the previous year, significant real growth in the gross value added was recorded in the section of wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; transportation and storage and accommodation and food service activities – 17.0%, the section of construction – 15.8% and the section of professional, scientific and technical activities and administrative and support service activities – 13.7%.⁵

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of the Serbian economy and account for two-thirds of formal business sector employment.⁶ According to an assessment of the socioeconomic impact of the crisis, business operations were interrupted in over two thirds of SMEs.⁷ While the pandemic exacerbated existing challenges for SMEs, such as access to finance and markets, it also opened up new opportunities with the rise of 'nearshoring'.

In 2020, the unemployment rate for the working population amounted to 9.0%, which is a drop of 1.4 percentage points compared to 2019, while the employment rate amounted to 49.1%, which is a growth of 0.1 p. p.⁸

	Male 2020	Male 2019	Female 2020	Female 2019
Employed	56.6 %	56,6%	42.1%	41.9%
Unemployed	5.4 %	6.2%	4.4 %	5.2%
Inactive	38.0%	37.3%	53.5%	52.9%

The size and characteristics of the informal economy and employment in Serbia in 2021 is still significant, according to the detailed description provided by the ILO overview from 2021. The size of the informal employment is 18.7%, with no major gender differences: rates are 18.4% for men and 19.0% for women. The total of 18.7% was composed of 6.2% in the informal sector, 8.0% in the formal sector and 4.5% in households.⁹

According to the Statistical Bulletin of Serbia National Employment Service (NES), in 2020, the average number of registered unemployed was 509 179, out of which more than 280 000 were women. The number of first-time job-seekers increased significantly in 2020, compared to previous years, representing 50% of total job-seekers. The structure of unemployed by qualification again shows clearly that education is a significant factor for employment probability. The educational profile of the unemployed registered with the NES is unfavourable, specifically the fact that a third of them do not have secondary education attainment and that many unemployed, mainly youth, are without work experience. The latest datasets available (September 2021) reveal that around 30% of registered unemployed hold 1st and 4th qualification level (ISCED level 2 and ISCED level 3) and 20% have education attainment corresponding to 3rd qualification level (ISCED level 3). The age structure of unemployed registered in September 2021 shows that approx. 20% of unemployed are young (15-29

⁴ Mihail Arandarenko, ETF, 2021

⁵ [Statistical Release](#), from 30 November 2021.

⁶ [WB-Covid-19 -Report-final.pdf \(ceves.org.rs\)](#)

⁷ OECD, 'COVID-19 CRISIS IN SERBIA', <https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/COVID-19-Crisis-in-Serbia.pdf>

⁸ Labour Force Survey 2020, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

⁹ ILO, 'Overview of the informal economy in Serbia 2021', (ilo.org)

years old) and 36% are older jobseekers (50-65 years old), underlining that age strongly influences joblessness risk.

Despite recent improvements of specific labour market indicators, young people in Serbia continue to experience difficulties in accessing the labour market, to find a stable job and remain in employment. The situation will most probably worsen given the prolonged effects of the Covid-19 crisis in Serbia and around the world. According to the latest Labour Force Survey data, the youth unemployment rate (age group 15–24) for 2020 was 26.6%, with a higher incidence among females, 29.5%. Despite the improvements, the youth unemployment rate is still double the EU-28 average. Youth without secondary education are fare worse than those with secondary and higher education.

The NEET rate (representing the share of young people who do not either work or study in the total population of the young aged 15–24) amounted to 15.9%, and it was higher by 0.6 p.p. in 2020 compared to the previous year (LFS). A particularly vulnerable group are young people who did not complete secondary education and are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs).¹⁰ The labour market position of young women, and those from rural areas, is considerably less favourable, compared to young men and those living in urban areas. The rural NEET rate is higher than in urban areas. This suggests that when inactivity not related to participation in education is taken into account, young people in urban areas experience an easier and quicker school-to-work transition. The NEET rate is lowest in the Belgrade region where most economic opportunities are concentrated, and highest in Southern and Eastern Serbia. In 2020, ETF looked closer to the youth situation in Serbia. According to the finding, a significant share of young people remains idle (in NEET status) for a year or longer. They may also experience lower wages when they find a job due to skills obsolescence.¹¹

The transition from school to work takes over two years in Serbia, compared to the EU average of 6.5 months. It takes longer for young women than young men to make the transition from school to work.¹² Recent studies showed a mismatch between educational qualifications and labour market requirements. Data from the Ministry of Youth and Sport's yearly Research on the position and needs of young people from 2020 shows that 35% of young people aged 15-30 think that they are occupying positions that require lower qualifications.¹³ Other sources show that one in three young university graduates could not find employment in 2018, 39% of young people aged 20 to 29 with a tertiary education were overqualified (worked in occupations that did not require tertiary education), and 42% of those aged 15 to 34 with a secondary education qualification worked in occupations unrelated to their qualifications. High outflows from unemployment to inactivity and 60% of young people who had a NEET status for the entire year also illustrate the labour market position for youth in Serbia.¹⁴

Even though women's position in the labour market has improved in recent years, which contributes to their economic independence, the gender gap (in terms of activity and employment) and gender pay gap (different earnings for work of equal value) persist. Women over 50 years of age who are laid off are particularly discouraged from seeking new jobs, while young women in the labour market often face problems in reconciling work and family life.¹⁵

¹⁰ Labour Force Survey for 2020, available at <https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-us/oblasti/trziste-rada/anketa-o-radnoj-snazi/>

¹¹ Youth situation in Serbia, Employment, Skills and Social Inclusion, ETF 2021, <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/youth-situation-serbia-employment-skills-and-social>

¹² Marjanovic Dragana, Labour market transitions of young women and men in the Republic of Serbia, ILO, 2016

¹³ Available at:

<https://www.mos.gov.rs/public/documents/upload/sport/inspekcija/Istrazivanje%20polozaja%20i%20potreba%20mladih%20u%20Srbiji%202020.pdf>

¹⁴ Youth Situation in Serbia, ETF 2021, available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/youth-situation-serbia-employment-skills-and-social>

¹⁵ Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette No 18/2021 and 36/21

Roma population's particularly poor educational profile puts them at greater risk of early school leaving in primary and secondary education, especially Roma girls. In recent years, the Roma accounted for more than half of all participants in adult literacy programmes. Although the percentage of Roma participants in 'financial' active labour market policy measures grew from 5.5% to 8.2% in the period of 2015-2019, it is still quite low.¹⁶

1.2. System overview

Professional orientation has a long tradition in Serbia and is one of the services offered by the National Employment Service as the institution with the longest history in the field. Strategy for career guidance and counselling was developed in 2010 by ministries, universities, and the private and civic sector. It introduced career guidance and counselling as services and activities to support individuals of any age, at any point in their lives, to make meaningful educational, training, and occupational decisions and manage their career. Following the Strategy adoption, the concept of career guidance and counselling was built into many strategic and legal documents. The laws that regulate every level of education mention career guidance and counselling and professional orientation (in elementary education). Professional orientation is used to refer to activities of (self) assessment and counselling to support individuals in their career planning, primarily when they first choose an occupation.

The existing policy framework in education, employment and youth recognises diverse career development support mechanisms. Ministries, employment services, agencies and councils, schools, universities, and civil society organisations acting as providers, have their roles identified and differentiated depending on the priority target groups.

National Employment Service is the key provider of career development support services for the unemployed and employed citizens within its registry. The governing regulations require elementary and secondary education schools to offer career development support services to their pupils and students. Teams composed of teachers and professional associates are supposed to offer the largest portion of the career guidance and counselling activities. Certain optional subjects at the secondary education level offer limited classes dedicated to career development. Special attention of the decision making authorities was given to the career guidance and counselling teams in vocational education and training programmes implemented through the dual model of education.

Career (development) centres are the dominant form at the level of public and private universities and faculties. Their main focus is on connecting students with the world of work by offering internship and job tasting experiences. Career centres within the youth offices and youth-oriented civil society organisations are also active to a certain extent, depending on the funding mechanisms (primarily grants) available.

The main quality assurance mechanism is provided with the Standards for career guidance and counselling services developed in 2019. Since then, there are continuous attempts to promote the Standards as a quality framework that should guide policies and practice related to diverse career development support activities. The Standards' central conceptual core is in career management skills development. These competencies are identified as crucial outcomes of career development support programmes in all different areas.

¹⁶ Ibidem

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

In its Economic Reform Programme for the period 2021-2023, Serbia committed itself to education and training reforms with a view to joining the EU. These include developing digital skills, lifelong learning, and qualifications in line with labour market needs; improving school-to-work transition through work-based learning; piloting Youth Guarantee, and improving skills information.

The Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling with Action Plan 2010-2014 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 16/2010-3) was developed and successfully implemented by a multisectoral working group coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. According to the Strategy, career guidance should be provided to individuals of all ages and labour market statuses. It should be guided by both the principles of labour market, bridging the gap between demand and supply, and the principles of social equality and inclusion, such as promoting the reintegration of marginalized youth and adults and their activation in the education system and labour market. The Action Plan for the Strategy expired in 2014, and its continuation has not been agreed upon.

Numerous other strategies, laws, bylaws, and local action plans, regulate career guidance and counselling, and professional orientation. In addition, career development policies in Serbia are formally integrated into other policy areas such as education, TVET, adult learning, employment policy, and youth policy. The standards guide the quality assurance of the career development support system for career guidance and counselling services.

In June 2021, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy for Development of Education by 2030. This is a comprehensive strategy referring to all education levels from ISCED 0 to ISCED 8, to adult education, teacher education, and horizontal aspects of the educational system. Strategy for Development of Education has the Action Plan for 2021-2023. The Strategy recognises career guidance and counselling as an important system that needs to become equally accessible for pupils, students, and adults, throughout their entire educational pathway, and not only when they decide which educational profile or training to choose. It is stated that the system intends to implement standards of CGC services to encourage individuals to undertake lifelong learning, to ensure it is possible to pass through different qualification levels (permeability) and higher labour market mobility.¹⁷ Besides career guidance and counselling the document also mentions pupils' professional (vocational) orientation system. The Strategy emphasizes developing new functional tests for assessing pupils' professional interests and training schools' psychologists on using them. The need to additionally train practitioners in education to provide professional orientation and career guidance services is recognised, as well as promoting the Rulebook on CGC standards.¹⁸

Laws regulating all levels of formal education recognise professional orientation and career guidance. The Law on the Foundations of the Education System mentions CGC as one of its key principles for personal, educational and professional development. The Law on Primary Education mandates schools to develop programmes and create teams for professional orientation. The Law on Secondary Education refers to CGC to empower mature, responsible career decisions among students with the support of schools' CGC teams. The Law on Dual Education has an accompanying bylaw (Rulebook) that expands the composition of CGC teams to include representatives of businesses and local self-government units. The Law on Adult Education describes CGC as support for personal and professional development and employment. The Law on the National Qualifications Framework recognises that the qualifications system should contribute to CGC and stipulates standards for career guidance. The Law on National Qualifications Framework acknowledges education goals related to qualifications in pre-university education in line with the modern concept of lifelong learning and career development. Under the objectives for vocational education, standards of qualifications in their structure also include 'taking responsibility for one's own continuous learning and advancement in work and career.' The Law on Higher Education and the Law on the Dual Model of Studies oblige universities and academies of

¹⁷ Strategy for Development of Education by 2030, p.19, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 63/21

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 39

vocational studies to support students in their academic and career development and finance the foundation of career development centres.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Social and Veteran Affairs adopted the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2021–2026. Career guidance and counselling activities are seen, among other things such as inclusive education, competency building via the acquisition of additional knowledge and skills through training and the recognition of the knowledge and skills gained in non-formal education and informal learning, as contributing to enhancing human capital and social inclusion and contributing knowledge-based economic growth by matching labour market supply and demand.¹⁹ Defining career guidance and counselling as a system of services to assist young people in choosing the right education pathway from the aspect of the occupation they wish to pursue, and to help adults become empowered for life-long career management, the Employment Strategy emphasizes the need for ensuring its availability to the widest range of citizens. At the same time, empowering National Employment Service and employment agencies' staff to provide CGC and employment counselling services in line with CGC standards is also recognised as important for building a quality system of CGC. Furthermore, regarding improving women's labour market position, strategy mentions encouraging female students to pursue education and, subsequently, careers in the ICT area and increasing support to women starting their businesses.²⁰

Professional orientation and career guidance and counselling are also stipulated in the Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance for people looking for employment or in need of planning their careers. The Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance²¹ defines employment services, which include the provision of information about employment opportunities and requirements, job matching services in Serbia and abroad, career guidance and counselling, implementation of active labour market measures, issuance of work permits to foreigners and stateless persons, in conformity with the law. Employment service providers are the National Employment Service and employment agencies. All persons looking for employment or need to plan their career, choose or change their occupation, are entitled to receive support in terms of information, professional orientation, advisory support, as well as support in developing capabilities for active job search. Under the professional orientation and career guidance, the selection of candidates following the job demands and their characteristics is also stipulated. National employment action plans, which became triennial after 2021, describe these services within the active labour market measures to be implemented by the National Employment Service (NES). In addition, local employment action plans are prepared by local self-governments to specify concrete and locally relevant measures for improving employment prospects in the respective city or municipality.

The National Youth Strategy 2015–2025, developed by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, has a specific goal to a developed functional and sustainable system of youth career guidance and counselling. The set of results related to this goal includes improving the national framework for career guidance and counselling, implementation and improvement of CGC standards and programmes, increased number of centres for career guidance and counselling that provide services to youth and local teams for career guidance and counselling of young people, continuous application of career guidance and counselling programmes, standards, and service in educational institutions and continuous application of CGC programmes, standards and services outside educational institutions.²² The National Youth Strategy is accompanied by Action Plan, 2018-2020. The Law on Youth (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 50/11) regulates the measures and activities undertaken by the Republic of Serbia, the autonomous provinces, and local self-governments to enhance the social position of youth and create the conditions for meeting their needs and interests, while also providing the foundation for the development of the youth sector. The Law on Youth requires financing of programmes and projects to encourage CGC service provision among youth. At the local level, cities or municipalities prepare policies like local action

¹⁹ Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2021–2026, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos 18/21 and 36/21 – correction, p. 31

²⁰ Ibidem, p.47, p. 60

²¹ Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos 36/09, 88/10, 38/15, 113/17 – as amended, and 113/17

²² National Youth Strategy, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 22/2015

plans for youth, which only in some cases envisage specific measures for CGC services based on local needs. The Ministry of Youth and Sport plans to revise the strategic and regulatory framework for youth policy.²³

²³ National Youth Council, Notes from the 17th meeting, available at: <https://www.mos.gov.rs/dokumenta/omladina/savet-za-mlade-2?lang=lat>, accessed in January 2021

3. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

3.1. Promoting coordination, cooperation and good governance

The policy framework described in the previous chapter clearly outlines the main institutions, organisations, and bodies responsible for the definition, management, and funding of career development services in the country.

Various institutions are involved in career development support provision and occasionally cooperate. However, there are no established sustainable and functioning mechanisms for coordination and communication. The coordination at all levels is missing, related to the activities and practices and concerning CGC related policies. None of the institutions responsible for career guidance and counselling is ready to lead the coordination.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development (MoESTD) is responsible for career guidance in the entire education system. The legal framework stipulates professional orientation teams in elementary schools, secondary school career guidance teams, and career centres in universities and adult education institutions. The work of the Ministry of Education is supported by the Institute for Improvement of Education, Institute of Educational Quality and Evaluation, Council for Vocational and Adult Education, Council for Higher Education, Council for the National Qualifications Framework, Serbian Qualification Agency, etc. The mandate for advising the Ministry of Education concerning career guidance and counselling is dispersed among these bodies, depending on the level of education and the type of service provider. Some of these bodies have occasionally been using their advisory role to propose specific policies in career guidance and counselling in cooperation with other stakeholders. However, none of them is continually devoted or mainly focused on career development support.

The NQFS Council is established as the counselling body providing recommendations regarding planning and development of human resources, in line with public policies in the field of lifelong learning, employment, career management and counselling.²⁴ Furthermore, the Agency for Qualifications supports the development of the national qualifications framework and official recognition and external quality assurance of publicly recognised organisers of adult education that offer CGC services. Among others, the Agency considers initiatives for introducing new qualifications, provides professional support to sector skills councils and prepares the proposal for qualification standards, maintains the Register of qualifications and manages the entry of data into appropriate sub-registers, monitors and measures effects of the implementation of (new) qualifications on the employment and lifelong learning, and proposes improvement measures for quality assurance throughout the system.²⁵

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs regulates professional orientation and career guidance in the employment sector. The MoLEVSA is responsible for employment service providers, the National Employment Service, and employment agencies. The National Employment Service is a public service provider for unemployed people and all other citizens seeking support to find employment and unemployment insurance.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports supports career guidance and counselling for young people through financing or co-financing programmes and activities, and conducting yearly research on youth. As per the Law on youth, the MoYS finances civil society organisations and youth offices through grants provided after the public calls. These yearly public calls aim to support the implementation of the National Youth Strategy. Hence, they also tend to encourage youth-focused or youth-led civil society organisations to implement career development projects to increase employability, employment and entrepreneurship among young people aged 15-30. Ministry supports the work of youth offices but is

²⁴ Law on National Qualifications Framework in Serbia, Official Gazette of RS no. 27/2018 of 6th April 2018, 6th to 24th January 2020

²⁵ Ibidem.

not responsible for their operations, as these are founded by cities and municipalities and hence are under the jurisdiction of local self-governments.

Based on the Agreement between the European Commission and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in 2013, the Euroguidance Centre in Serbia was founded within the Tempus Erasmus+ office. The Euroguidance centre Serbia promotes the European dimension of career guidance, career information and mobility and builds the capacities of career guidance practitioners with a focus on teachers and professional associates. Its most prominent activities include conferences with experts from other European countries, national awards for best career guidance and counselling practices and seminars for the practitioners.

These organisations share common goals for career development support. The wider societal goal for career guidance is perceived as increasing employment and activity, transitioning to the labour market, employability, and supporting educational goals. A shared understanding among policymakers and stakeholders across sectors and policy areas exists of the primary purpose of career guidance services and operation of the services. However, it is not always clear what are the desired outcomes of these services and how to optimize the use of resources and achieve complementarity and synergy among different actors.

The current level of change readiness and adaptability allows the concepts of vocational (professional) orientation and CGC to coexist in the strategic and legal framework and in-service providing organisations. Professional orientation usually denotes the activities (assessment, self-assessment) aimed to support individuals in their career planning process, primarily when they chose their first occupation.²⁶ Decision-makers still use the traditional concept of professional orientation in programmes for teachers' education. It is also widely used among teachers, professional associates (schools' psychologists and education specialists), career counsellors, and psychologists working as consultants for human resources development. This tradition persists even though Standards for career guidance and counselling are promoted among different systems as a quality assurance framework based on career management skills and empowering individuals for lifelong career management.

The Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) envisaged a national resource centre for career counselling and guidance, whose functions should include to ensure the overall coordination and development of the system of career guidance and counselling and to represent the permanent connection between the fields of education and employment in this regard. Although foreseen, this mechanism has not been established. Moreover, the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for CGC envisaged the protocols on cooperation between key actors in the development of the system of career guidance and counselling, which was not achieved.²⁷ The multisectoral Working group established by the Government for monitoring the Action Plan (2010-2014) was recommended²⁸ to undertake the coordination role as a permanent body. It included the Ministries in charge of education and of employment, the National Employment Service, the Chamber of Commerce, universities, local self-government, and one civil society organisation (Belgrade Open School). This permanent body has not existed since 2014.

Cooperation was renewed through the Working group mandated by the Ministry of Education. The Working Group for Development of Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling Services formed in 2017 by the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Upbringing (VET and Adult Education Centre) was comprised of the ministries of education, youth and employment, the Council for Vocational and Adult Education, the Institute for Evaluation of Education, NES, the Chamber of Commerce, The

²⁶ Rulebook for Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling Services, Official Gazette of RS, No 43/2019

²⁷ Report on the implementation of the Strategy of career guidance and counselling in the Republic of Serbia for the period from March 2013 until December 2014

²⁸ Feasibility study regarding the founding of the national resource centre for career guidance and counselling in Serbia and further development of career guidance and counselling system in Serbia, EU Delegation, 2014, available at: <http://pyle.si/2016/05/31/feasibility-study-regarding-the-founding-of-the-national-resource-centre-for-career-guidance-and-counselling-in-serbia-and-further-development-of-career-guidance-and-counselling-system-in-serbia/>

Serbian Association of Employers, practitioners from the schools, representatives from the university-based career centre, Euroguidance, international organisations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)) and the civil society organisation, the Belgrade Open School (BOS). The standards were adopted by the Ministry of Education in June as the Rulebook on standards for career guidance and counselling services and have served as the recommended framework for quality assurance in CGC. They establish the basis for planning, development, and evaluation of career guidance services in education, employment, social protection and youth sectors. The standards define four complementary areas that rely on EU guidelines (such as the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network tools): standards of career management skills as the core conceptual framework, organisational standards, standards of career guidance programmes and standards for practitioners' competencies (see chapter 9 for more details).

Since 2019, there have been some attempts to foster cooperation among key actors in the career development support system through the Council for the National Qualifications Framework. This Council brings together high officials and representatives of education, employment, youth, economy, local self-governments, health, private sector, NES, trade unions, secondary schools, higher education institutions and civil society. As the standards were adopted, efforts were made to promote their implementation in a coordinated manner through the Council for the NQF. As a result, the Council adopted Recommendations for the implementation of the plan for application of the standards in December 2019.

The Agency for Qualifications presents the most recent example of an initiator in the CGC actors' cooperation. The National Qualifications Framework of Serbia is recognised as an umbrella policy that can connect the interests and satisfy the needs of partners in sectors of employment, economy and education. NQF puts an individual at the centre of the process and relies on the concept of lifelong learning and lifelong career management. Therefore, the NQF is fruitful ground for establishing policy coordination among different partners from education and the world of work. The Agency for Qualifications recognised quality assurance and application of CGC standards as a key topic in addition to stakeholders' coordination. The Action Plan 2021-23, following the Strategy for Education Development, plans at least five publicly recognised providers of adult education of CGC accredited and at least five programmes for CGC accredited.²⁹ Following these assumptions based on strategic documents, in December 2021, the Agency formed the Working Group for Career Guidance and Counselling. This multisectoral Working Group primarily gathered actors from the education sector (vocational and adult education), employment, commerce, youth, civil society, and international projects. The WG aims to support the Agency in operationalising CGC Standards in the areas of its mandate. The focus is on preparing forms and guidelines for organisations interested in applying for the status of publicly recognised providers of career guidance and counselling.

The cooperation among actors at the regional or local level varies depending on the city and the municipality. It is usually not formally required and depends on the local context, the presence of the donor-driven projects, practitioners' capacity to network and establish partnerships, and sometimes on their motivation and enthusiasm.

At the regional level, the project Education to Employment (E2E), supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by NIRAS-IP Consult, is active from 2015 until 2023 and works in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, NES, MoESTD and other stakeholders in the field of education. In the project, CGC is considered a bridge-builder between sectors. Local non-governmental organisations called brokers are given a central role to mediate between market players (NES, schools, employers and families). Seven local civil society organisations based in five cities cover around 18 localities in Central, South-East, and South-West Serbia. They act as service providers, using different tools and methods obtained through the project's resources.³⁰

²⁹ Available at: <https://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/AP-Strategija.docx.pdf>

³⁰ Data available at <https://znaniemdoposla.rs/>

Besides the cooperation supported through projects, at the local level, schools often communicate with the local NES branch offices so that pupils can access professional orientation - psychological testing and counselling. This coordination on the use of resources is crucial when schools are not entitled to employ professional associate-psychologists due to insufficient pupils. Schools, local youth offices, and civil society organisations also tend to cooperate and exchange information, as indicated in schools' CGC programmes and plans, NES annual programmes, local action plans for youth or local employment action plans. In Vlasotince, the Technical school made an effort to join the Local Employment Council, the body in charge of implementing the local employment action plans, and position themselves as a stakeholder, even though their participation was not initially envisaged. By achieving that, the school was able to influence the development of local employment action plans and propose some measures based on their students' needs to gain employment. This is a continuation of the school's efforts to deepen public-private partnership to ensure that their students get labour market relevant vocational education and career guidance activities.

In some cities, local cooperation mechanisms are established. For example, in the City of Krusevac, the actors signed a Protocol on partners' cooperation for implementation of the strategy for CGC in 2011, which led to the formation of the Council of Partners for Career Guidance and Counselling. This council is comprised of 24 local institutions from various sectors. Chaired by NES Krusevac, it has met quarterly every year since its foundation to coordinate members' efforts on local career guidance policies and practices.

As shown in the previous paragraphs, many instances of cooperation exist among stakeholders and providers of career development support activities. However, these examples are mainly focused on task-based on project-based terms. Further measures are needed to reach the structured coordination of various services, aiming at well-integrated/coordinated delivery across different target groups or intervention stages. The acknowledgment of the CGC in the current policy framework and the experience from various projects could foster multilevel coordination and cooperation at the system level.

3.2. Key civil society stakeholders

Civil society organisations have played a significant role in improving the career development support system, both at the level of policy advocacy and issuing policy recommendations and in providing career development support services at the central, regional, and local levels. As described in chapters about policy framework and coordination, CSO actors are members of many working groups, councils, and other bodies in charge of creating strategies, laws, bylaws, CGC standards, and other relevant documents. In some cases, they also support the monitoring and evaluation measures.

The civil society organisation Belgrade Open School is well known as a service provider as well as a partner in policy development. They offer online career counselling, an interactive guide for young people transitioning to higher education, and accredited training programmes for career guidance practitioners. With the support of diverse donors, BOS also carries out CGC-related research, publishes a wide variety of analytical reports and handbooks, issues policy recommendations and undertakes advocacy initiatives to improve the CGC system. Belgrade Open School initiated the development of the first CGC Strategy and supported Agency for Qualifications in preparing the First national report on implementing standards for CGC.³¹

The GIZ in Serbia partnered with CSO Inventiva Centre in training teachers and professional associates to provide professional orientation in all elementary and some secondary schools in the framework of the project Professional Orientation implemented from 2011 to 2015.³² The cooperation continued on subsequent projects supported by the GIZ where Inventiva Centre provided professional orientation and

³¹ Data available at: <https://www.bos.rs/uz-eng/career-guidance-and-counseling>

³² Data available at: <http://profesionalnaorijentacija.org/>

career development support services to pupils and young people, including vulnerable youth, migrants, and refugees, building capacity of teachers and professional associates in CGC.³³

E2E project took a significant role in operationalizing instruments for accreditation of adult education providers for CGC services. Civil society organisations they support actively provide career development support services. Among many others, they support the local practitioners' association, the Association of psychologists Novi Pazar. Other organisations are the Timok Club, the Citizen Association 'Osveženje', the ZIP Centre, the Development Business Centre Kragujevac, the Business Innovation Programme and the Education Centre Krusevac.³⁴ In addition, through many donor-supported projects the Education Centre Krusevac actively supports and encourages the work of the local Council of Partners for Career Guidance and Counselling described in the previous chapter.

Civil society organisations are flexible in the approaches used to reach vulnerable groups, such as those not in education or employment. The focus is more on supporting individuals' careers and life decisions. Many non-governmental organisations at the local level have proven efficient in providing career guidance to NEETs, school dropouts, Roma, or the migrant population. They are supported by ministries, the EU and bilateral donors. However, the main barrier of the services they provide is sustainability after the end of the project and assuring continuity.

The recognition of the CSO's role is shown in the Employment Strategy. They are acknowledged to have emerged as important labour market actors, especially in the area of outreach, career guidance and counselling, and work with youth from multiply vulnerable categories.³⁵ Furthermore, the same document announces that in amending the legal framework in the area of employment, the modality and scope of enabling the civil society organisation to obtain the status of employment service providers will be considered. The option of gaining this status would mean that CSOs can apply for the funds allocated for ALMMs. Diversifying funding sources could be an essential step toward assuring the sustainability of various career development services that depend on donors' resources, which are time-bound.

The association of career development support practitioners does not exist in Serbia. There are associations of psychologists, HR professionals and similar, with limited activities in career development support. The lack of professional associations impedes the further professionalization of career guidance practitioners in Serbia.

³³ Available at: <http://centarinventiva.com/en/>

³⁴ Available at: <https://znanjemdoposla.rs/en/local-partners/>

³⁵ Employment Strategy, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos 18/21 and 36/21 - correction

4. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The summarized presentation of the key service providers, target groups, modalities of work and staff is provided in the table below.

Provider	Target groups	Modality	Staff
Elementary schools	Final year students	Professional orientation teams	Teachers, professional associates ³⁶
Secondary schools	Targeting students (parents) according to the CGC programmes & plans	Teams for career guidance and counselling	Teachers, professional associates, peers, company representatives
Higher education institutions	Students	Career Centres (universities, some faculties)	Employed practitioners, professors
National Employment Service	Unemployed (registered), Vulnerable groups and PWDs, Employees at risk	Branch offices. Centres for Information and Professional Counselling	Employment counsellors, career planning counsellors
Youth offices	Young people NEETs	Career Info Points, Career Centres	Youth workers, external associates
CSOs, international organisations	Depends on a project (students, NEETs, vulnerable groups, adults)	Project teams	Employed staff, expert associates
HR departments, HR and employment agencies	Employed	Learning and development activities	HR Professionals
	Young people	Professional orientation for students	Consultants

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

Teams for professional orientation in elementary schools were trained to use a five-step model (self-discovery, discovering occupations, discovering education paths, real encounters with the world of work and decision-making) developed by the GIZ. The model was introduced through a large-scale professional orientation project involving 100 elementary schools and defining a set of activities for final grade students to explore personal characteristics and the world of work. There are no precise data on how many schools still use the model and to what extent they offer career development support to pupils and parents.

In secondary school curricula, some aspects of career guidance are covered in subjects such as entrepreneurship (obligatory in the final year of some VET schools) and the elective subject civic education (topics related to CV preparation, active job search and similar). However, the key providers are career guidance and counselling teams stipulated under the Law on Secondary Education. These teams need to have yearly programmes and plans for CGC. Career guidance teams in schools of

³⁶ Professional associates include schools psychologist and schools pedagogue.

secondary education include school psychologists, education specialists and teachers. Secondary schools' CGC teams offer a wide variety of services that combine curricular and extracurricular activities, some of which are online. They assist students and parents in identifying and using the information on education opportunities, occupations and jobs; job shadowing and testing; and individual or group counselling. Some teams also organise career management skills workshops. Teams in VET schools also consider that one of their roles is informing elementary school pupils about educational profiles and occupational options. The aim is to encourage students to consider VET as an educational option.

Teams for CGC in VET profiles that implement dual profiles are required to prepare students for the context of work-based learning in dual education. Their work is regulated by the Law on Dual Education and the bylaw on CGC in dual education (special Rulebook). Career guidance and counselling teams in vocational education and training profiles that implement dual education must include representatives from the companies, employment service, local municipalities, and relevant professional associations, besides teachers and professional associates. Moreover, parents and student parliament representatives are encouraged to join CGC teams' meetings.

The teams for CGC in dual education have a role in matching employers and students involved in work-based learning. The team is mandated to organise presentations where students and their parents can meet the companies. On the other hand, they also need to prepare students for the interviews with companies. In the end, they are expected to create the list of matched students and companies and support students in transition towards the work-based learning context. During the WBL, the CGC teams are expected to monitor the students' motivation and overall satisfaction with the in-company training and empower students to identify and document their experiences, benefits, and achievements. The bylaw also requires CGC teams to organise a minimum of a one-hour-long career counselling session for each student during the school year duration. Each team should have a coordinator from the school. The coordinators organise and facilitate team meetings at least once per semester, prepare minutes, delegate tasks to other team members, and perform other activities.³⁷

Employers are encouraged to participate in students' career development. According to the Rulebook on training programme, conditions and other affairs related to licensing instructors in dual education³⁸, in-company instructors need to be adequately trained to provide career information, participate in counselling and contribute to the development of skills relevant for employment.³⁹

The handbook for teachers involved in dual education, the handbook for students and parents on dual education and the handbook for companies in dual education have been developed to support key stakeholders in dual education.⁴⁰ Handbooks elaborate the work of career guidance and counselling teams, among other topics, and provide some additional instructions for teachers expected to organise CGC activities. For instance, specific instruments in working with students are recommended, such as Career Portfolio.⁴¹

Teachers from general secondary and non-dual VET sometimes establish fruitful cooperation with local service providers from employment offices (mostly NES), youth offices, non-governmental organisations, parents, and businesses. In some schools, students also support CGC activities as peer educators. Outdoor treasure hunts, online escape games, online simulations with classic literature characters during the language classes, and virtual companies to experience the world of work are some examples of the creativity, innovativeness, and enthusiasm of career practitioners from secondary schools. In addition, school-based practitioners in some schools can cater to a range of clients' needs.

³⁷ Rulebook on conditions, methods, activities and composition of the Career Guidance and Counselling Teams in schools of secondary education that implement dual education profiles, Official Gazette, 2/2019-67

³⁸ Official Gazette of the RS, 70/2018

³⁹ See <https://mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Vodic-za-skole-DUALNO-OBRAZOVANJE.pdf>

⁴⁰ Available at the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development, <https://mpn.gov.rs/prosveta/dualno-obrazovanje/dualno-obrazovanje-u-srednjim-skolama/>

⁴¹ Handbook available at: <https://mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Vodic-za-ucenike-i-roditelje-DUALNO-OBRAZOVANJE.pdf>

This capacity is demonstrated through career guidance programmes tailored to address with individual learning plans the needs of students at risk of dropping out, students with disabilities, etc.

The project DECIDE⁴² – Dialogue on Employment, Creation, Initiative, and Dual Education – is financed through German cooperation and implemented by the GIZ in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The DECIDE project presents a continuation of the projects ‘Reform of Vocational Education and Training’ and ‘Youth Employment Promotion’ and it will run from 2020 until 2022, but may be extended to 2023. The project empowers the selected schools with the methodology and tools (online questionnaires) for conducting tracer studies. Teachers take the central role in maintaining contact with students one year after graduation to obtain data on their employment status and satisfaction. Moreover, the project empowers six VET schools to take a more active role in the community and foster their students’ employability. It builds schools’ capacity to implement existing career guidance and counselling regulations and provide career development support to students, parents and employers from their communities. Selected secondary vocational schools from different regions are supported to become regional centres of competence that use the dual education approach. Achieving the status of publicly recognised organisers of adult education, career guidance, and recognition of prior learning, is expected to position VET schools in the market. Accreditations issued for the relevant authorities would guarantee quality and prove the value of the offered services. The possibility of generating additional incomes through providing various services could increase the motivation of practitioners to organise and deliver numerous career development activities beyond the legal requirements and offer them to the broader group of users.

The vision of integrated and quality assured services for adult education, vocational training, career development support, and prior learning recognition is shared among actors in education and employment. To encourage the VET schools to obtain this status, Education Development Strategy plans for concrete measures, such as developing procedures for accreditation of CGC programmes and CGC providers in the area of adult education. Employment Strategy also hopes for more accredited non-formal learning and employability service providers to support subsidized active labour market measures.

Career development centres are established at **public and private universities and faculties**. The number and quality of career guidance services offered to students vary depending on the number of staff employed (from one to seven per centre) and the competencies and material resources available. Universities’ career centres have successfully built long-standing relations with businesses. Consequently, they can provide labour market information on industries, trends, and occupations. Students can experience the world of work and gain skills and practical experience through programmes like project-based learning (as a pedagogical approach) and internships or joint lectures.

The project CareerS⁴³ financed by EU Tempus (2011–2015) to improve CGC in higher education was led by the University of Belgrade Centre for Career Development, in partnership with other career centres (Nis, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Singidunum), ministries, companies and BOS. One of the achievements was the career management skills framework, which was used as a basis for the elective extracurricular course Career Management Skills, introduced in 2015 at the University of Belgrade. Several other higher education institutions started to introduce career management skills as a curricular topic or extracurricular activity. Online tools for information, counselling, or courses are in place but has become more prevalent during the pandemic.

4.2. Unemployed support and support to NEETs

The main service provider for unemployed support in career development is National Employment Service. NES and private employment agencies provide professional orientation and counselling, namely career information about employment opportunities and conditions, counselling on career

⁴² <https://decideprojekat.org/en/about-the-project/>

⁴³ Available at www.careers.ac.rs

development, recruitment and selection. In addition, NES provides employability assessment, the development of individual employment plans, and self-efficiency workshops.

NES employment counselling involves assessing a jobseeker's employability. The individual employment plan specifies the types of support agreed between the jobseeker and employment counsellor and occupations to be considered in the job search. Jobseekers' employability assessment examines their qualifications, knowledge, skills, work experience, and job search motivation against labour market requirements. It leads to deciding whether they are ready to seek work immediately or need more intensive support through participation in active labour market policy measures.

Professional guidance and career counselling are delivered through information provision and counselling regarding career development opportunities to prevent wrong choices of educational pathways or occupations, as well as strengthen clients' competencies for making effective decisions throughout their professional careers. The NES annual report states that in 2020, 5775 clients used the onsite career information service and 6920 attended counselling sessions on career development (out of 10 000 planned). The career development support services are provided in person at the National Employment Service branch offices, in career guidance and counselling centres, and via the National Employment Service website.

NES surveys employers' needs in cooperation with Serbian Employers Association to anticipate annual trends and further builds labour market information, which has a limited use for NES career counsellors. NES actively cooperates at all levels with stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sector on CGC policy and practice development. This institution is trusted among parents and teachers for psychological assessment at career transition points, as it is well-established. Specialized NES counsellors impartially present training and retraining options, including VET programmes offered by NES. The dominant career guidance mindset is matching or adjusting skills supply to business needs in the market.

The NES network consists of 30 regional and local branches. Most employ at least one career guidance counsellor (a trained psychologist), while 13 also offer career information services. It also participates in many projects. The Report for 2020 published by the NES shows what kind of activities were offered to young unemployed people in order to prevent their skills and competencies becoming outdated and thus long-term unemployment. The so-called 'Youth Package' included 216 496 individual employment plans, active job search training for 6 644 young persons (3 575 women), self-efficacy training for 149 persons (95 women), a workshop for overcoming stress caused by the job loss for 47 persons (31 women), Job Club for 827 persons (507 women), Job Fairs for 963 persons (542 women). Other measures for young people included training for entrepreneurship development, traineeships, internships, programmes for gaining work experiences. NES also organised functional adult education for persons without elementary education. Furthermore, to stimulate the activation of hard-to-employ categories, NES subsidized their employment, especially those with disabilities without experience (68 persons in 2020, 23 women).

For registered unemployed people, the programmes are often offered to those whose chances of finding a job are higher, while those who are most vulnerable, most hard to employ and at the same time at the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion stay out of reach and are not fully included in ALMMs. Many objective reasons, such as inactivity of young people from the most vulnerable groups, limited access to NES branch offices due to high transportation costs or lack of information and low family support, may explain such a situation. However, responsible institutions, and particularly NES, must find new ways to ensure better targeting. This calls for increasing NES capacity (e.g. engage more counsellors, allocate additional funds and reach vulnerable young people while working on seasonal jobs) to promote the Youth Service Package among the younger generation, but also to provide services and measures to highly vulnerable groups and find new ways to reach those who constantly stay out of scope.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Youth Situation in Serbia, ETF 2021, https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-06/youth_in_serbia.pdf

Young people considered as active also need additional support for their activity to lead to employment, rather than slipping into passivity as a result of discouragement. The number of youth seeking work with support from the National Employment Service has decreased in recent years; however, the fact that almost one out of two youth registered with the NES have been looking for a job for over 12 months, and one out of three – for over 24 months is concerning and indicates the need for a more efficient system-wide intervention where career guidance and counselling measures could play a significant role.

The Employment Strategy 2021-26 recognises the reduction in the share of NEETs in total youth primarily as a result of the reduction in the share of active youth, and hence a clear need to develop an approach or model for reaching those young people who are passive, demotivated and do not seek institutional support. The Action Plan for Implementation of Employment Strategy for 2021 =2023 calls for the development of a model for reaching, registering and activating youth in the NEET group who are left out of the system that was developed in 2022 with the donor funds and with the cooperation of MoLESVA and MoYS, CSOs, NES, LGs, youth offices, and the 'Education to Employment - E2E' programme. A fall in the NEET rate by 2030 is one of the indicators defined by the Strategy for Education Development. The target is set at a rate of 15% of NEET in 2023. The Strategy aims to increase the quality of the teaching process and access to pre-university education. It also has a goal of strengthening the upbringing activities of educational institutions.

Career guidance and counselling of NEETs is recognised within the current Action Plan for National Youth Strategy Implementation. The National Youth Strategy Evaluation Report for the period 2015-2020 shows that in total three CGC activities targeting NEETs were implemented in full by 2020. Activities included: financial support to programmes targeting young unemployed people out of the education system and young people from the vulnerable groups⁴⁵ (1 500 persons reached), support to local teams providing CGC services to young people belonging to vulnerable groups (15 activities and 1500 young people), and supporting CGC activities for NEETs implemented according to CGC standards (12 activities/projects supported and 3000 young people reached). According to the Action plan for the National Youth Strategy, these activities were planned to be implemented with the ministry responsible for employment, the ministry responsible for economy, the ministry responsible for youth, the ministry responsible for education. The main implementers were local self-governments (youth offices) and civil society organisations who have been awarded with grants from the MoYS. Their activities were planned to be supported by the NES and international donors.

In addition to the National Employment Service as a key provider, other providers focused on young people and young NEETs and other vulnerable groups like youth offices, civil society organisations and projects.

The model of career centres in youth offices, formed as units within the local self-governments was developed and piloted in several cities. A limited number of temporary employees work in youth offices. However, when they are trained in professional orientation or career guidance, they cooperate with stakeholders at the local level and serve as a point for career information in most of the cases, and in some cases also for career education and career guidance, for young people. Many youth offices received support from the GIZ to develop Career Info Corners and provide information on education and career opportunities at the local level and information about other services that offer counselling or additional support in career planning.⁴⁶ Peer career counsellor schemes were also piloted in certain number of youth offices and have proven to be a useful model for reaching out to young people, especially from vulnerable groups.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ The National Youth Strategy specifically recognises the groups of young people who are vulnerable, marginalised, at risk of social exclusion and poverty as well as those who are exposed to multiple discrimination and exclusion.

⁴⁶ Available at: <http://profesionalnaorijentacija.org/o-projektu/uloga-kancelarija-za-mlade/>

⁴⁷ Available at: https://www.bos.rs/rs/publikacije/14/646/brosura-o-vrsnjackom-karijernom-informisanju_-karijerni-informatori-2011.html

Many non-governmental organisations at local level have proven efficient in providing career guidance to NEETs, school dropouts, Roma or the migrant population. They are supported by ministries, the EU and bilateral donors (the SDC and the GIZ). Education2Employment project established CGC services to improve the effectiveness of active labour market measures and enhance the employability of NEETs. The project recognises multiple vulnerable groups of youth – those defined as vulnerable by the NES, but also some additional. The support starts with the assessment through instruments such as competencies cards, BasicCheck test, competency-based interviews.⁴⁸ Career counsellors additionally support clients in identifying the possible career paths and the transition. The users are presented with the suitable options available through the project – non-formal vocational training with the work-based learning component included. In the course of the project, 14 000 young people have benefited from CGC services so far.

Youth Employment Promotion Project was implemented by the GIZ and the Ministry of Youth and Sports as from 2015 to 2019. To increase youth employment and activity in the labour market and skills match, the project focused on young NEETs, young Roma people and young people returning from abroad and facing the challenge of labour market integration. The project combined tailored professional orientation and career guidance interventions with vocational training courses, social enterprise development, and support for young farmers. It involved youth offices and non-governmental organisations to instil local ownership. Almost 1 500 young people and around 200 young Roma were employed. Around 10 000 people attended training courses on active job searches and career planning.⁴⁹

Another project supported by the GIZ, Inclusion of Roma and other marginalised groups in Serbia, aims to provide support to partners, at the national and local level, in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in Serbia for the period 2016-2025 in access to social protection, employment, education, housing and health care. During the 2 years of the Phase II Inclusion Initiative, nine cities and municipalities in Serbia, with the help from the project, supported the employment of over 300 people and provided over 1 100 services in the field of sustainable inclusion and employment measures based on national and local strategic documents for over 700 beneficiaries of which 50% are women.⁵⁰ Municipalities supported by the project partner with local CSOs to create mobile teams for inclusion. In Valjevo, support is provided through specially designed training and mentorship programmes to build competencies for employment and social inclusion. Career development support activities are provided in partnership with the local NES branch office and schools and in cooperation with social service, pedagogical assistants, and health mediators. The Mladenovac Roma population benefited from training programmes for active job search, self-presentation to employers, and self-efficacy training. Mobile team for Roma inclusion and Local coordination unit for Roma social inclusion include members of the local municipality council, social service, employment service, health mediators, pedagogical assistants, and other stakeholders.

4.3. Workers/Employed

All measures intended for the unemployed are available for employees threatened by dismissal, especially for surplus employees. NES organises training for labour market, offering practical skills such as accounting, sewing etc. Career development measures such as psychological workshops for overcoming the stress caused by job loss and recently introduced workshops for psychological support in career development targeting clients threatened by dismissal are offered.

The key providers of career development support services for employed persons are HR departments within the companies where individuals are employed or private HR agencies. The key activities provided are learning and development – training and workshops, both for hard skills and soft skills, mentoring, coaching including career coaching, succession planning. Private HR consulting agencies in addition, offer services to those who want to change their job or occupation. They develop programmes

⁴⁸ Available at: www.znanjemdoposla.rs

⁴⁹ Available at: <http://odskoledoposla.org/karijerno-vodenje-i-savetovanje/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.ukljucise.org/en/news-and-events>

like job placement or career transition support packages (including assessment, career counselling, exploration of potential training or re-training opportunities, job offers).

Erasmus+ project CONNECT! – Connecting Career Counselling and Human Resource Development in Enterprises for Higher Education and Training in Practice (2019-2022) is implemented in 6 countries, among which is also Serbia with Belgrade Open School as a partner in consortium. A Review of theoretical frameworks, promising practice and actual needs based on literature, media and other resources done in the course of the project indicated a low level of career development support provided to employees in Serbia in comparison to Western European countries. Serbia has a low level of usage of career development techniques. Reasons may be in the lack of contemporary knowledge about management and organisations, accompanied by the lack of financial resources since many of the techniques are expensive for organisations to implement.⁵¹ Based on the available data, it could be concluded that small and medium-sized enterprises fall behind large ones in offering career development support to their workers.

The project brings another report presenting the results of the two surveys sent by Belgrade Open School to professionals in the fields of career support of adults. The surveys done in 2020 included 16 human resource management professionals and 11 CGC professionals. Among surveyed HR respondents two work in small companies, with less than 49 employees, 5 in companies that have between 50 and 249 companies, while others come from larger companies. The survey⁵² showed that those who participated considered their role important in many domains of the professional life cycle in enterprises, like the development of professional knowledge and skills, integration of (new) employees, and management of changes. The development of personal and social competencies was also generally seen as significant. Among different reasons for providing career counselling in enterprises, arising the commitment to the enterprise, achieving higher learning effects, achieving higher acceptance of the (external) counselling offers and raising the credibility of the counselling. Concerning the issues that are subject to career counselling, the majority of questioned career practitioners state that they often deal with further education and training. Career planning and learning and performance problems are also stated as counselling issues that career practitioners face. When it comes to modalities of work, most practitioners working with enterprises provide the services at the clients' workplace. Some of them said they provide services one-on-one, in groups, and together with (enterprise) internal managers/trainers/coaches. The same survey among HR professionals working in large but also in small companies showed that they most frequently in their job take initiatives for quality development and innovation, as this is the activity that around half of the respondents said that they do every week or several times in a month. However, providing career information, assessing career skills and competencies, and executing actions of social responsibility were by the majority of respondents listed as activities being done several times a year.⁵³

In Serbia there is an increase of non-standard forms of employment. A research study on digital work states that several data sources indicate that Serbia has a large number of an active digital workforce.⁵⁴ There are virtual spaces for sharing experiences among platform workers as peer support mechanisms. Career development support services for this population of workers still need to be established. Due to their precarious position and uncertain tax treatment, they should have access to career guidance services. With the changing nature of work, including less standard company contexts, and increasing independent employment (freelancing, contract work, platform work), and the related internationalization of work and education, there is a need for services for a growing group of self-employed that is left unattended.

⁵¹ Đurović Aleksandra, Manić Radoičić Jelena, Connect, National Report IO1 – Serbia

⁵² Connect, IO2, National survey on the current practices, needs and requirements of experts and professionals in the fields of CGC and HRM in Serbia, Aleksandra Djurovic, Available at: <https://connect-erasmus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CONNECT-IO2-Serbia-National-Report.pdf>

⁵³ Ibidem,

⁵⁴ Andjelkovic B., Sapic, J. & Skocajic M. (2019). Digging into Gig Economy in Serbia: Who are the digital workers from Serbia and why do they work on global platforms? Belgrade: Public Policy Research Centre. <http://publicpolicy.rs/publikacije/961581c6008514f57a7635bbdf8c7bc1cbe24fea.pdf>

ICT is reported to be the fastest-growing sector in the last decade in Serbia. Serbia generates almost 10% of its GDP from the ICT sector, becoming one of the major export sectors. Data from the government's Commission for Protection of Competition show over 2 500 firms in Serbia's ICT sector in 2019, employing more than 28 000 people. The civil society organisation StartIT has recently set up a web platform for IT professionals or those planning their career in IT industry. It offers career counsellors to help clients plan their careers in the IT sector, setting career goals and matching with mentors (more experienced IT professionals).⁵⁵

Special Collective Agreements that trade unions sign with the Government of RS at the branch level have a mandatory section or article about professional development and training. This stipulates the right and obligation of employees to continual professional development and subsequently to work improvements. On the other hand, employers are obliged to determine methods for professional development in line with the policies and priorities of the relevant ministry and the available budget and to prepare plans for employees' professional development. Employees cannot be responsible if employers do not provide professional development and hence cannot bear any consequences.⁵⁶ The employees have their rights during the necessary lifelong learning protected so that the burden of upskilling is not only on them when average incomes are still low. These Special Collective Agreements are valid for the entire state territory and all public activities such as administration, justice, social affairs, health, education, culture, science, police and other state bodies, public companies. Employees in the private sector do not have the same rights because there are no Collective Agreements. There was a success in signing lower-level collective agreements with employers but in minimal numbers.⁵⁷ The topic of career development support in terms of developing career management skills or career guidance of workers has not been in the focus of trade unions. They offer advice to their members related to labour law and labour rights of the workers threatened by the dismissal or those illegally dismissed.

The influence of employers' organisations in career development support of workers is limited and focused on offering opportunities for paid professional development through organising training, conferences, seminars. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Serbia has the Education Sector that offers specialised education and training targeting employees in different industries from all hierarchical levels.⁵⁸ The Chamber has a very important role in licensing companies and instructors for dual education programmes and invests a lot of resources in promoting dual education to address the needs of the business through initial and continual vocational education and training. The Chamber also administers a registry of contracts for dual education.⁵⁹ The Serbian Union of Employers is an employers' association joined by employers voluntarily. Its key role is participating in the social dialogue. Union also offers education in health and safety, labour law, managerial practices, etc. It is devoted to human resource development initiatives such as projects, especially with the ILO, National Employment Service and other partners.

There are no specially designed services for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with limited resources for internal HR or career support provision. Social partners should have a greater role in supporting MSMEs, e.g. providing skills needs assessments and forecasting (for sectors), facilitating cooperation with adult learning and vocational education and training institutions for continuous professional development, also tapping into the formalisation of non-formal and informal learning at the workplace and the recognition of prior learning.

Career development support for workers in the informal economy are not developed enough. Initiatives should be in place to make individuals working in the informal economy aware of their possibilities to

⁵⁵ Data available at: [Pridruži se mreži za deljenje znanja \(startit.rs\)](https://startit.rs)

⁵⁶ Special Collective Agreements published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 92/20, No 93/20, No 27/20, No 29/20, No 58/20

⁵⁷ Special Collective Agreements published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 76/2016

⁵⁸ Available at: <https://pks.rs/strana/edukacija>

⁵⁹ Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/>

access qualifications, decent work, and benefit from social protection. There should be special initiatives for rural populations and individuals performing domestic work, particularly women.

5. FUNDING

Funding by central government exists for all relevant public career development support services. National Employment Service Financial Plan allocates funds for the implementation of active labour market policy measures. Funds are allocated for the implementation of active labour market policy measures foreseen by local employment planning documents, ensured from the autonomous province and local self-government budgets. In the National Employment Service Financial Plan 2021, RSD 5 200 000 000 from compulsory social insurance contributions and RSD 52 796 000 from a direct grant to the National Employment Service from the IPA 2013 programming cycle allocates for the implementation of active labour market policy measures. In the National Employment Service Financial Plan 2021, RSD 900 000 000 are planned for the implementation of active labour market policy measures foreseen by local employment planning documents; these funds are ensured from the autonomous province and local self-government budgets.

NES publishes annual reports that include general information about the usage of funds. These reports show the amount of resources invested in all active labour market measures, comparing the planned and used resources. However, data related to CGC measures only are not provided.

The targeting of active labour market policy measures and priority co-funding of local employment planning documents of local self-governments in underdeveloped areas should be reviewed further. Employment Strategy states that introducing a training voucher system would increase access to training for the unemployed, who would be able to undertake training when they need it and not when it becomes available after the annual public procurement procedure. A prerequisite for introducing a voucher system and for further improving the labour market training programmes is strengthening the non-formal education service providers system, including the availability of more NFESPs with more approved training programmes available across the Republic of Serbia. However, the Strategy misses to foreseen career guidance voucher system or similar incentives.

Under the Law on the Republic of Serbia Budget 2021, in Budget Section 31 – Ministry of Youth and Sports, funds are provided for Programme 1302 – Youth Policy, Programme Activity/Project 0006 – Youth employment support programmes and projects, economic classification 463 – Transfers to other levels of government and 481 – Grants to non-governmental organisations, amount: RSD 100 000 000. Evaluation reports about the implementation of the National Youth Strategy Action Plan Part present the number of financed projects and the amounts granted. Part of these funds is undoubtedly used for financing career development support activities, but since they are usually intermitted with other measures supporting employability, it is difficult to precisely determine the amount.

Public expenditure for education as a percentage of GDP fell in recent years – from 4.3% in 2010 to 3.8% in 2015 and 3.6% in 2018. The share of education in total public expenditure in 2018 was 8.8%. While the student population continues to decrease, participation in compulsory education is now virtually universal.⁶⁰ Salaries of the teachers and professional associates are funded from the budget through educational authorities at the republican level or the autonomous province level. Teachers involved in the work of career guidance and counselling teams are not additionally compensated for the time invested in the career development support extra-curricular activities. Action Plan for Education Development Strategy foresees some career guidance activities and defines corresponding indicators but does not plan any significant funds for CGC related activities from the budget.

The accurate representation of data regarding the level and types of expenditure in career development services should be improved. Investments in the innovation of the resources available for practitioners for daily work, i.e. tools, instruments, equipment, etc. are not regularly planned. As pointed out in the Strategy for Education Development, school psychologists use outdated tools for assessing the students' professional interests that do not reflect the existing occupational fields.

⁶⁰ ETF, Serbia – Education, Training and Employment Developments 2021

Client participation in the financing of the service can be evidenced in the case of the students of the Belgrade University. When enrolling to the academic year of their bachelor studies, students are obliged to pay a token sum of RSD 100 (less than EUR 1) per academic year for the Centre for Career Development. This amount helps Career Centre to assure additional funding besides the funds available through the budget of the University, coming from the state. Moreover, the financial contribution raises awareness among students about the Career Centre and motivates them to use the services. Financial reports of the BU are public and published on the official website of the university.

Clients are regularly paying to private providers (agencies) that offer professional orientation or career transition and job-hunting services. The prices vary based on the type of services provided, local context at the market the origin (national versus international company) and the level of expertise of the service provider.

Certain funds are allocated to career guidance and counselling activities through donor-supported projects. The amount of the awarded grants is usually transparent. The funds are implemented by international companies or consultants, or through allocating grants to civil society organisations performing career development support activities. CSOs receiving grants contractually oblige to manage project budgets in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations and under the donor's supervision and abiding to each funding organisation's procedures.

There are no significant financial incentives to the development of career development activities by individuals and organisations. Belgrade Open Schools' Career Fairs, organised once per year since 2015, award the best CGC teams from secondary school with monetary prizes. Although these amounts were not too significant (from RSD 10 000 to 30 000) they were available for investments in equipment, teaching or learning materials that could enhance career development support of students. The schools used these resources to purchase flip chart tables, projectors, drones, visits to the fairs or museums, etc. The funds were provided from the donors' sources (Solidar Suisse from 2015-2020; a private international company financed the prizes for the first time in 2021). Winners of the Euroguidance national competitions for good practices in CGC, mostly practitioners, are often awarded the educational study visits abroad with all costs covered.

6. ACCESS

National Employment Service demonstrates the capacity to cater for clients' needs to a certain extent. This institution provides services tailored for vulnerable groups or hard to employ citizens. These citizens have a priority when it comes to active labour market measures. Under this category, NES recognises people without elementary education, people without secondary education, people aged 50+, people in long-term unemployment looking for a job for more than 12 months, women long-term unemployed. Young people under 30 years of age, especially young women, young people without a secondary education degree and working experience, are also recognised as targeted hard to employ groups. Moreover, young people without parental care, victims of domestic violence, victims of human trafficking, refugees and returnees, single parents, parents for children with disabilities. NES also identifies people with disabilities, Roma, redundant workers, beneficiaries of social assistance, and unemployed people in rural areas as a vulnerable group (who are sometimes reached through project-supported caravans). As stipulated by NES yearly plans, special attention needs to be given to those people who have multiple factors of vulnerability.⁶¹ However, the limited resources and limited outreach to these categories, question their access to career development support services.

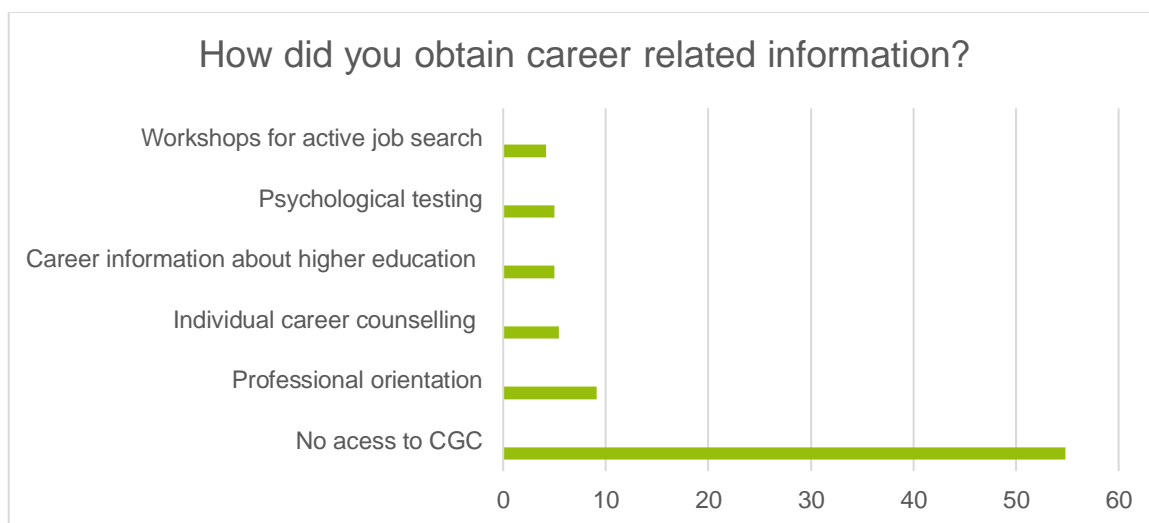
As the survey implemented in the framework of the project Connect (2019-2022) showed, people with disabilities, older employees, and employees preparing for retirement are less likely to be recognised as groups in need of career development support. The career practitioners and human resources employees have not had the opportunity to work with them or because they are less likely to be recognised as a target group for this support group. The situation is similar for people from the migrant population. Access to career guidance and counselling services is likely to be limited to these groups. Therefore, different measures must pay special attention to their inclusion in existing career guidance and counselling services, or the development of new services intended for them. Also, topics of working with vulnerable groups of employees could be included in the framework of professional development of human resources employees and career practitioners. However, other evidence shows that access to career development support services could be significantly improved for all young people.

The Ministry of Youth and Sport conducts yearly Research on the position and needs of young people in Serbia. The research in year 2020 targeted 1500 young people aged 15-30 through representative stratified random sampling. 26.4% of the survey participants consider unemployment as their greatest problem. 8% left their education, stating the lack of finance as their main reason. Only one-third of them is registered with the National Employment Service, which is the lowest number of registered in comparison to the previous studies. However, 67% were searching for a job and most of them for longer than a year.⁶²

When asked to identify how they were searching for and obtaining career-related information, **54.8% of young people stated that they have not participated in career guidance and counselling activities.** Out of this group, 70,1% are 15-19 years of age, whereas 67.7% are not from urban areas. What is worrying is that it looks as if the percentage of those young people who have not received any support in their career development is increasing. In 2018, the percentage was 51%, and in 2019, 49%, according to the same research. Lack of access to career information seems to be limiting career prospects for many young people. As the main reason for not participating in traineeships programmes young people stated the lack of information about these programmes (36.2%). According to the data, there is a growing number of young people who cannot find the traineeship programme for their desired occupation and those not willing to participate in unpaid traineeships.

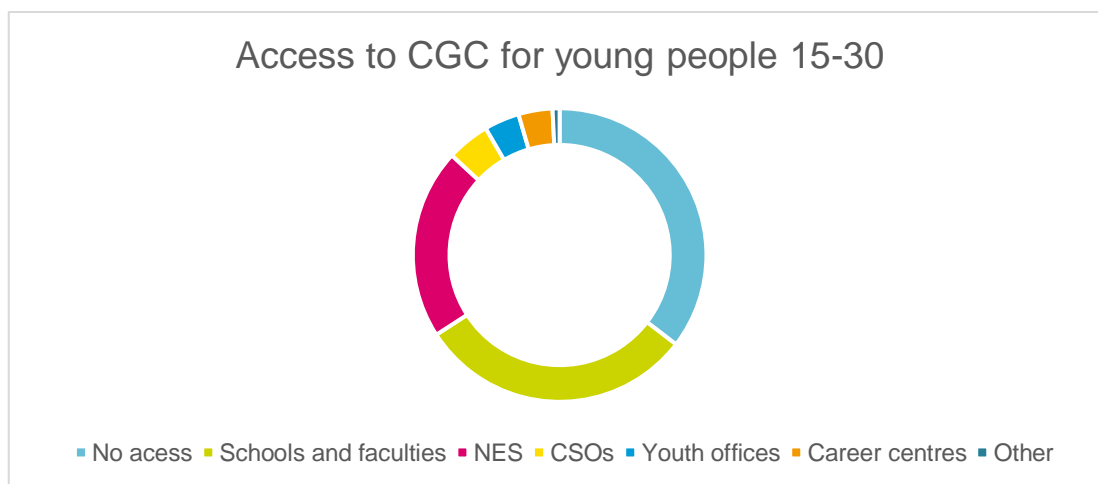
⁶¹ NES annual plan for 2021, available at www.nsz.gov.rs

⁶² Research on the position and needs of young people in Serbia in 2020 available at <https://www.mos.gov.rs/public/documents/upload/sport/inspekcija/Istrazivanje%20polozaja%20i%20potreba%20mladih%20u%20Srbiji%202020.pdf>



Of those who did search and found some career-related information, the highest percentage (9.1%) mentioned professional orientation activities. In the descending order, they also identified individual career counselling (5.4%), career information about higher education (5.0%), using the instruments for psychological assessment, attending the workshops for active job search, obtaining information about the occupations, soft skills training, real encounters, group career counselling, career management workshops (2.2%), job shadowing (0.4%).

The same group of those who did obtain career information recognised the following as service providers: schools or faculties (47.1%), National Employment Service (32.5%), civil society organisations (7.3%), youth offices (6%), career centres (5.8%), other services (1.2%).



Active Labour Market measures recognise employees at risk of dismissal as a specific vulnerable group. Measures include employee training at the employer's request in cases where employees need additional knowledge and skills to perform jobs and tasks to retain their jobs with that employer. If certain employers show interest, the NES organises the training for the employees by contracting one of the publicly recognised providers of adult education certified by the Ministry of Education or the Agency for Qualifications.

Recognition of prior learning is identified in numerous policies guiding education or employment, although the system is still in the early stages of development. Strategies like the National Qualification

Framework or Employment Strategy recognise this concept. Action Plan for Employment Strategy foresees that prior learning recognition piloting started in 2021. Agency for Qualifications and 12 sectoral councils act as institutional initiators of the development of the necessary qualifications that can also be acquired through prior learning recognition. This concept is fundamental given that one in three unemployed persons on the National Employment Service register has incomplete secondary education. Prior learning recognition is possible for the qualification levels II, III and V. The process can be organised by schools or other organisations that are publicly recognised organisers of adult education with special approval for recognition of prior learning.⁶³

Rulebook on standards and manner of conducting the procedure of recognition of prior learning⁶⁴ integrates standards for career guidance and counselling. A school must have staff (employed teachers) as prior learning recognition advisers. Standard 2 states that advisers are considered competent for prior learning recognition if they have competencies of career guidance practitioners as defined within the Standards for career guidance and counselling services. This is a very important step in aligning official policies with the Standards. Measures need to take place to assure training of RPL advisers in line with the competencies for career guidance practitioners during the RPL piloting.

As an example of outreach activities in areas outside the major cities, Caritas has launched a regional long-term project called 'Your Job', supported by the Austrian Development Agency, to encourage the employment of young people. The goal of the project is career counselling, support for young people, training, opportunities for internships and for starting a business. The project covers three municipalities: Ruma, Aleksinac and Zrenjanin. Support in the first phase includes professional orientation or career counselling implemented by education or adult education specialists, career workshops (preparation of the CV, career planning). Second, the project team organises specialised vocational training courses or soft skill training courses for the young unemployed people targeted, followed by networking of employers and unemployed young people through traineeship schemes. Measures to support young unemployed people in building entrepreneurial skills and starting their own businesses, especially focused on young women, are also offered. A special focus of the project is on outreach toward young Roma, and especially Roma girls.⁶⁵

DIMAK Serbia, the German Information Centre for Migration, Vocational Education and Training and Career, operates under the global programmes 'Migration for Development' and 'Migration and Diaspora' implemented by the GIZ. DIMAK operates within the National Employment Service in Belgrade and within the Commissariat for Migration and Refugees of the Republic of Serbia, while outreach network is to be extended to Migration Service Centres (part of the National Employment Service) in Niš, Novi Sad, Novi Pazar, Kruševac, Kraljevo and Bor. Information, counselling and referral services for those who are undergoing return and (re)integration include topics ranging from career counselling, skills development in line with labour market needs (VET and other types of training, on-the-job training, internships), job matching to job creation, self-employment, business start-ups and mentoring. The services also include complementary information and referral services in the areas of mental health and psychological support (housing, healthcare, administrative issues), social, and educational (re)integration. Regular migration refers to comprehensive advisory services and referral to all those interested in migration towards Germany and vice versa.⁶⁶ Counselling services are tailored to each potential migrant individually, kept open-ended, intended to contribute to a well-informed decision on the issue of migration and inform about the risks of irregular migration. DIMAK services are provided free of charge in different formats such as individual and group information and counselling services (info sessions, peer to peer) and can be accessed face-to-face, by phone, e-mail, on-line via DIMAK Serbia Facebook page, WhatsApp and Viber.

⁶³ Available at: <https://mpn.gov.rs/prosveta/srednje-obrazovanje/obrazovanje-odraslih/priznavanje-prethodnog-ucenja/>

⁶⁴ Rulebook on standards and manner of conducting the procedure of recognition of prior learning, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 148/2020

⁶⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/YourJobSrbija/> and <https://caritas.rs/your-job/?lang=en>

⁶⁶ <https://www.startfinder.de/en/advisory-centre/advisory-centre-serbia>

Several educational initiatives were implemented targeting population of migrants.⁶⁷ For example, Belgrade Open School implemented E+ project ALMIT from 2018 to 2020. The project developed and piloted schemes and training delivery mechanisms enabling a swift labour market integration of legal migrants. The adopted approach performed screening of abilities of the targeted people to initial civic integration, skills profiling and matching, thus encouraging their entering into local labour market. Career development in the form of career information and career counselling was also offered to legal migrants from reception and asylum centres.⁶⁸

SOS Children's Villages Serbia has a programme 'Strong Youngsters – Social Inclusion and Economic Sustainability of Young People at Risk' that started in 2016. Within this project, the Career Centre 'Strong Youngsters' is operating in Belgrade with the main aim of increasing employment of young people who have had or still have a status of a child without parental care or are involved in programmes of supporting families in risk.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Overview available at https://kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Site_Profiles_May_2021.pdf

⁶⁸ Data available at: <https://almit-project.eu/>

⁶⁹ Available at: <https://sos-decijasela.rs/en/our-programs/program-strong-young-people-social-inclusion-and-economic-sustainability-of-young-people-in-risk/>

7. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

In 2020, according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 81% of households in the country had an internet connection, and 74.3% had a computer. The percentage of computers in households varies depending on the territory with approximately 91% of households in Belgrade having a computer. The Research on the position and needs of young people in Serbia conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sport in 2020 showed that 72.3% of young people use online tools for additional education and training. Still, most of them do that only occasionally. However, it also shows that 27,7% of young respondents do not use online tools.

The website of the National Employment Service www.nsz.gov.rs has been redesigned recently. It contains numerous information about the NES programmes, public calls, activities, reports, etc. It offers an online database of the job posts opened and an online application for registered users. In addition, information about the ALMMs is offered. Users interested in obtaining career information or guidance can learn about these services provided by the NES branches, the addresses of centres for information and professional counselling that operate within 13 NES branch offices. The National Employment Service started to adapt to online format certain segments of the training programmes to support unemployed users in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Training 'Active job search' and training 'Path for the successful entrepreneur' was adapted to the online mode during 2021 to be offered during 2022 to registered clients.⁷⁰ National Employment Service developed an interactive online platform, 'Guide for choosing an occupation'.⁷¹ The platform is designed for elementary school pupils to help them transition to secondary education, especially vocational education, through clarifying occupations. The portal offers self-assessment tools, database of occupations and information on schools available. The usage of this portal increased during pandemic, as indicated in the NES annual report for 2020. However, it has not been updated with the recent developments in VET and does not mention dual education profiles.

Foundation Tempus Erasmus+ in cooperation with the MoESTD manages the platform www.obrazovanje.rs, as a non-commercial database of all educational opportunities in the Republic of Serbia, from secondary and tertiary level of education. It also provides information on scholarships and mobility schemes.

In 2010, the Belgrade Open School launched the BOSKarijera online platform for career development support. The platform offers free-of-charge online self-assessment tools to identify personal strengths, skills, and interests in areas or professions and difficulties in deciding on a career. Based on the results of some self-assessments, users receive automatically-generated recommendations for occupations, and database with the descriptions of occupations helps them acquire more information. Moreover, the platform offers an 'address book' of universities, faculties, and vocational training academies, and offers information on the available options for higher education in Serbia. Users can further exploit the online CV builder and online career profile tool to prepare for the next steps in their career development. An online career counsellor hired by BOS is available via email to further support users.⁷²

During the pandemic, BOS counsellor received an increasing number of visitors searching for information or advice. They conducted a study Analysis of the questions received through the BOS online career advisory with recommendations for online services.⁷³ One of them recommends offering more online services, as there is an evident need among young people from all levels of education, from those not in education, employment, or training, from inactive and those employed, to seek online career

⁷⁰ <https://nsz-onlineobuke.nsz.gov.rs/?redirect=0>

⁷¹ Available at: <http://www.vodiczaosnovce.nsz.gov.rs/index.php>

⁷² Available at: www.karijera.bos.rs

⁷³ Available at: <https://www.bos.rs/rs/publikacije/14/9295/da-li-je-pametno-da-sledim-svoje-snove---analiza-pitanja-postavljenih-u-okviru-karijernog-savetovanja-portala-bos-karijera-sa-preporukama-za-sprovođenje-onlajn-usluga.html>

development support. Based on the research finding that young people mostly ask about the occupations, positions, salaries, progression routes, it is concluded that accurate and up-to-date labour market information must become more available. Furthermore, the existing data provided by the Statistical office or NES should become more approachable to those seeking to learn from them. On the other hand, young people need support in strengthening their career management skills related to choosing relevant information sources and using the information to make career decisions and ICT skills needed to collect and monitor relevant information.

Due to an urge to shift online as caused by pandemic, almost all providers adjusted their career development support services but also some new ones have been created. However, there are no precise data on the number of career practitioners or young people using digital solutions for career guidance and counselling, but some of the good practice examples were identified.

Some practitioners from secondary schools were preparing video lessons on career management skills to be uploaded to eLearning platforms or shared via social media. Different web tools were used for one-on-one career counselling sessions. The Technical School in Bor has developed an innovative online computer game to approach career decision-making in a fun way that is attractive to students. The game is called Escape Game – Career Journey Exploration.⁷⁴

The Ministry of Education adapted educational activities during the Covid-19 pandemic to fully online or blended models. Teachers were engaged in preparing video lessons published via the national broadcasting service and the web platform My School – RTS Planet. Some of the lessons related to VET and dual VET programmes attracted elementary school pupils and parents interested in learning more about VET programmes and occupations. The selected videos were classified in a way to be easily used for a sneak picking into curricula of the specific vocational programmes. In total 290 videos are available on the national database for professional orientation.⁷⁵

Online or hybrid events and conferences replaced the onsite gatherings. Euroguidance Serbia organised the Ninth National Competition of Good Practices in the Field of CGC and the hybrid online conference to announce the winners and present CGC trends. An online training course called Introduction to CGC in Secondary Schools, accredited by the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Upbringing is available for teachers in Serbia.⁷⁶ The Euroguidance centre offers teachers to schedule individual consultations if they need support in planning their activities and to download self-assessment checklists from their website. It provides a handbook for practitioners, a yearly career bulletin and other resources. Numerous webinars were available for elementary and secondary school students to support their career choices and support teachers and parents. Individual online consultations are also offered.⁷⁷

With the support of the German Cooperation, the GIZ project DECIDE organised Girls Day online for the second time. This is as an international event to overcome gender-specific stereotypes in the field of occupation and work. Hosted by a technology company that develops software and hardware, the event aimed to inspire girls from secondary vocational and general schools about diverse career opportunities, presented by successful women.⁷⁸ The German Information Centre for Migration, Training and Employment (DIMAK) also adjusted its activities. DIMAK Facebook live sessions are organised on the different topics in career guidance and counselling and employment opportunities in Serbia. Online workshops are organised on the international labour environment, such 'Grow professionally for a global market' and 'Career guidance for youth', intended for those who needed support in career related

⁷⁴ Available at:

<https://view.genial.ly/5eb3faf54a7fce0d5029f9ea/game-breakout-misteriozna-soba>

⁷⁵ Available at: <https://mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Profesionalna-orijentacija.pdf.pdf>

⁷⁶ Available at: https://euroguidance.rs/aktivnosti/obuke/online_kurs_uvod_u_kvvis/

⁷⁷ Available at: <https://www.obrazovanje.rs/upis>

⁷⁸ Available at: <https://decideprojekat.org/en/news/girls-day-2021-personal-development-curiosity-motivation-and-persistence-are-key-to-a-successful-career/>

decision making, and more information about the trends in the international labour market. In the areas of regular migration, multiple online workshops and seminars have been conducted⁷⁹.

The University-based Career Development Centres also accommodated their existing activities to the online setting and created some new ones. In 2020 Career Development Centre of the University in Kragujevac organised 'traditional April workshops for students' online. More than 1 300 students attended the e-workshops that covered soft and technical skills and career development-related topics and were held via web platforms and social media streaming.⁸⁰ The Career Development Centre of the University of Belgrade used Zoom for career chats called 'Zoom coffee'. Experts from certain fields were chatting with students while offering advice related to diverse topics relevant for career planning and development. More than 45 recordings are available online.⁸¹ Career Development Centre of the University in Novi Sad offers virtual interview simulator and online handbooks for career development.⁸²

The largest database of online resources available for career practitioners is developed, administered, and continually updated by the Euroguidance centre.⁸³ The data base is developed based on the activities that teachers and other practitioners created to support their students' career development. The materials available are classified into categories: for parents, for teachers, for secondary school students, for elementary school pupils, Planning the CGC activities, One-on-one activities, Workshops, Career Information, Presentation to Employers, Self-assessment. Most of these activities are also collected within Handbooks.⁸⁴ The Euroguidance centre prepares newsletters distributed to the network of career guidance practitioners and stakeholders informing about recent policy and practice developments in Serbia and EU.

Many interventions aim to empower teachers (hence also career practitioners in the education system) on how to use online tools for learning. The most recent are the Instructions for teachers on how to manage tools for online learning, prepared by the OECD and CEPORA, and published on the Institute for Improvement of Education website.⁸⁵

The importance of further increase of digital competencies among teachers and schools' professional associates is emphasized in strategic documents. Action plan for Education Development Strategy defines several indicators related to the goal of digital competencies: percentage of schools' employees trained on how to use innovative pedagogical approaches based on ICT and Digital Competences Framework, percentage of schools that use SELFIE instrument for self-assessing digital competencies, percentage of schools that plan their further digital development. However, there are no measures that specify the need to introduce eGuidance or similar tools.

Employment strategy recognises digitisation as a tool to make NES services more accessible to employable persons and further encourage their activity. There is a certain risk of digitisation identified – it could lead to further aggravating the passivity of hard-to-employ persons. For example, digitising individual employment plans could contribute to activating the unemployed, but it is acknowledged that this measure should not substitute individual interviews with employment counsellors, especially when it comes to hard-to-employ persons.

⁷⁹ Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/DIMAKSrbija/>

⁸⁰ Available at: <http://razvojkarijere.kg.ac.rs/article/radionice-i-prezentacije/onlajn-aprilske-radionice-2020.html>

⁸¹ Available at: <http://www.razvojkarijere.bg.ac.rs/zoom-kafica>, accessed February 2022

⁸² Available at: <http://www.razvojkarijere.uns.ac.rs/>

⁸³ Available at: <https://euroguidance.rs/resursi/bazaaktivnosti/>

⁸⁴ Available at: https://euroguidance.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2020_euroguidance_prirucnik_aktivnosti_kviz.pdf

⁸⁵ Instructions for teachers on how to manage tools for online learning Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Upravljanje-alatima-za-onlajn-ucenje-1.pdf>

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

8.1. Standards

The Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling Services developed through intersectoral cooperation and adopted by the Ministry of Education in form of a Rulebook provide a recommended framework for quality assurance of CGC in education, employment, youth and social protection. They were designed through intersectoral cooperation to promote the accessibility of CGC services and career management skills, and to ensure quality.

The standards introduce four complementary areas. Standards for career management skills are the conceptual core, as they define three key areas of personal and professional development: self-discovery and self-understanding, gaining insight into opportunities in educational and occupational spheres, and career creation. Within these areas, individuals' competences are defined as:

- self-examination ability and the ability to create a picture of oneself in relation to educational and career opportunities;
- the ability to select relevant sources of information about educational and career opportunities, actively and continuously seek information, and use relevant information to make decisions;
- the ability to carry out career development planning and career development management in transitional periods or changes.

The expected outcomes are defined for each of these competences.

Organisational standards define the conditions, requirements, procedures and principles on which the quality of services is based, for example, planning, communication, cooperation, monitoring and evaluation. The standards of career guidance programmes offer a structural framework, instructing programme creators to base their goals and outcomes on career management skills.

Standards for practitioners' competences promote quality and professionalism among practitioners and outline ethical principles such as working in the clients' best interest and respecting privacy. Three specific areas (counselling, informing and training in career management skills) describe the competences and outcomes. For instance, under the counselling area one of the competences 'Providing support to users in planning and setting their career development goals' relates to outcomes such as 'Understands main concepts of different personality, competences, and motivation development theories' and 'Understands cultural and socioeconomic context, personal and family factors in users' development and behaviour'.

The purpose of these standards is to provide guidelines on how to develop CGC services and programmes so that the goals and outcomes are focused on the development of career management skills, and to evaluate, self-evaluate, and enhance existing programmes and services.⁸⁶

Strategic documents in the field of education, employment and youth envisage the implementation of standards. For instance, Action Plan for implementing the Education Development Strategy foresee several measures concerning standards. Measure 1.1.3.8. foresee that Agency for Qualifications will organise promotions of the Standards. Announced changes of the Law on National Qualification Framework should further strengthen the role of career guidance and counselling and assign some additional tasks to Agency for Qualifications.

⁸⁶ https://euroguidance.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/standardsofcareerguidancecounseling_eng.pdf

8.2. Staffing

The qualifications of practitioners who provide CGC vary, since there are no master's or bachelor's degree programmes offered in this field. Subjects related to career development, counselling or coaching can be found in psychology, adult education or human resources management curricula.

All counsellors for career planning and career information who work in the National Employment Service have qualifications in psychology and counselling. In elementary and secondary schools, including VET schools, teams for career guidance and counselling are composed of psychologists, pedagogues and teachers of various subjects. CGC practitioners in schools are mainly focused on other tasks and are expected to deliver on CGC in addition. The involvement in the work of CGC teams does not influence their compensation. Initial education of teachers does not cover the contents related to students' career development support. In other organisations, CGC is also provided by psychologists, educators, adult educators, professionals from different areas, youth workers and others.

Keeping in mind that there is limited formal education for career development practitioners, most acquire competencies through continuing professional development programmes, non-formal learning, courses, seminars, etc. Although it was not set as mandatory, most of these programmes are in line with the CGC standards. The competencies of career guidance practitioners are strengthened through training programmes offered by the Euroguidance centre, the non-governmental organisation Inventiva and BOS, among others. Currently, ten continual professional development programmes have been accredited by the Institute for Improvement of Education and offered to interested practitioners in schools. Training programmes for CGC of vulnerable persons, like young people at risk of dropping out from formal education, are also available. These programmes are mostly paid from different projects' resources. In rare cases, schools pay for the training courses from their own budget, allocated from local self-government.

The general framework for the self-assessment of guidance competencies and the development of training programmes lies in the standards for career practitioners' competencies. Most of the programmes for teachers' continuing professional development accredited by the Institute for Improvement of Education, are in line with the standards, although this alignment is still not set as a mandatory requirement. These programmes focus on career management skills and offer models and specific methods for career information, education and counselling. The Plan for applying the standards mentioned above envisages that all continuing professional development programmes related to career guidance will have to be aligned with standards to become accredited.

In accordance with the Employment strategy Action Plan, the alignment of internal training programmes for the NES staff providing employment counselling, career planning and career information services with the CGC standards and verification by the quality management system for was started in 2021. Training of employment counsellors and career planning and information counsellors, as well as the private employment agencies, in the provision of CGC services in line with the adopted standards was in place in 2021. This activity will continue in 2022 in cooperation with Ministry of Labour, NES, E2E project and BOS.

In 2020 the first Euroguidance CGC programme for social workers was accredited by the Institute for Social Protection. This institute is responsible for official accreditation of training programmes for social workers in different areas, in addition to its duties related to social care.

The survey among career guidance practitioners within the project Connect, conducted as described in the previous chapters, showed that there are various ways in which they gain the necessary knowledge to fulfil their roles. Both self-study and exchange of experience are seen as important. They consider self-study (internet, MOOCs, books etc.), enrolment in continuing education, attending short training courses, workshops and conferences and advice from internal peers and experts as important means

to improve their knowledge and skills. It is also relevant that some representatives recognise mentoring, consultations and counselling as something they would find useful for professional development.⁸⁷

Based on the survey and literature review in six project countries, Connect project (2019-2022) will use the collected data coming from the first two outcomes to develop a didactic framework and programme description for an (academic) curriculum on career guidance and development for employees. Moreover, the project team will also develop a didactic framework and course concept to train professionals in the career guidance and counselling and human resources development field. The aim is to equip professionals in both public and private settings with strategies and materials that support them in facilitating career development within and between organisations.⁸⁸

Besides implementing CGC training programmes for the continuing professional education of teachers and schools associates, the Action plan for Education Development Strategy plans the 'Professional guidelines for implementing professional orientation and CGC activities in all schools'.

8.3. Quality of data and information

Standards for the production and delivery of quality careers related information exist within the Standards for career guidance and counselling services. Standards of career management skills mark 'Identifying possibilities of the worlds of education and work' as one of three key areas. Selection of relevant sources of information on educational and career opportunities, active and continuous search for information on educational and career opportunities and using relevant information to make decisions are key competencies in this area, according to the CMS standards. When career practitioners want to be active in providing career information they should be able to: use different sources of information on educational and career opportunities, organise and store information on educational and career opportunities, provide support to beneficiaries in using educational and career information. Each of these competencies goes with the corresponding outcomes. Organisational standards guide providers of CGC services to base their service provision on reliable and relevant sources of information. The organisation should encourage their staff to keep up to date with the world of work and education and to improve their work accordingly. At the same time, it also needs to define the criteria for evaluating various sources of information it collects.

While the standards set the proper bar that providers and practitioners should meet, they might be too high for the current practice. There are many web-based materials providing career information on education and training options and pathways and occupations.⁸⁹ They are available through national employment agencies, educational institutions, civil society organisations' career services, the private sector (websites for job search). However, none of these databases is neither comprehensive nor integrated with each other. Another challenge is the youth-friendliness of some information relevant for career development, for instance, labour market information provided by the National Employment Service.

One potential for increasing the availability of career information is the Registry of the qualifications that is published online on the website of the Agency for Qualifications.⁹⁰ The platform is designed to offer a valid and reliable database of qualifications and professions linked to those qualifications. In this form, the information on qualifications could be available to educational institutions, policymakers, researchers, career practitioners, especially career or vocational counsellors.

⁸⁷ ConnectT, IO2, National survey on the current practices, needs and requirements of experts and professionals in the fields of CGC and HRM in Serbia, Aleksandra Djurovic, Available at: <https://connect-erasmus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CONNECT-IO2-Serbia-National-Report.pdf>

⁸⁸ Available at: <https://connect-erasmus.eu/de/project-outcomes/>

⁸⁹ One not mentioned earlier is the database of occupations with videos developed by E2E project, available at: <https://znanjemdoposla.rs/opisi-poslova-znanjem-do-posla/>

⁹⁰ Available at: <https://noks.azk.gov.rs/pretraga-registara/pretraga-nacionalnih-kvalifikacija.html>

The Strategy of Education Development plans to introduce a unique information system of education and promote the usage of data acquired through this system to make decisions about education. The portal should digitalize the data referring to different surveys and research together. Cooperation among the Agency, Ministry of Education, and the Office for eGovernance will be in place to develop such a portal. Statistical Office of the RS is mandated to prepare the analytical tool for labour market intelligence system to build digital tools to assure validity and reliability of NQF data. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education will develop analytical profiles of sectors to inform different interested target groups of all ages about the status of certain professions at the labour market, salaries in certain sectors, possibilities for career development services, etc.

On the other hand, an Action plan for implementing the Employment Strategy anticipates activities such as consolidating information on labour market demand through an established integrated vacancy database. Also, the plan is to develop a functional platform for a single labour market information system. These activities rely on setting standards for occupations and establishing a registry of occupation standards, with information about the tasks included, main competencies needed, means used for working, place of work, usual working hours, presence of any specific risks in performing occupation-specific, etc. These LMI should allow monitoring labour market changes and obtaining information on occupations in high demand. Consideration of the tendencies and employers' future needs should be achieved through the enhanced employer survey methodology and procedure.

These platforms sound very promising for building a comprehensive LMI valuable base for career development support. However, it should be planned to develop the databases in a format that could be approachable to diverse users, especially young people. Having in mind limited human resources in public services and schools and a high percentage of young people without access to career services, online platforms should be designed to allow them to easily navigate and find the information needed. Young people should be involved in the process of ensuring that the web platform is user-friendly. Organisations working with youth can play a large part, not only in promoting this platform and information and ensuring that it is available to young people with fewer opportunities (such as young people from rural and remote areas), but also in the process of its developing and reflecting the needs of young people.

8.4. Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

National Employment Service Annual Plans are monitored regularly, and yearly reports are published on the NES website. Data provided within the reports include the number of users of vocational orientation and career planning services provided for the national level as well as for each regional or local branch office. The results achieved are compared to those planned.

The Employment Strategy recognises that the system-wide action needs to be taken in the forthcoming period to further develop an integrated system for monitoring and evaluation of active labour market policy measures. Improving the monitoring system entails improving the methodology and modality of reporting on the active labour market policy measures implemented and the funds spent. In addition, further development of local employment policy requires improving the monitoring reports on the implementation of measures from local employment planning documents, in particular those measures implemented with local self-government funds and technical support of the National Employment Service. Monitoring ALM measures' effects (net and gross) is also part of the Action plan for Employment strategy's implementation.

Evaluation reports about the implementation of action plans corresponding to national strategies show the level of achievement of certain indicators, including those for career guidance and counselling where they exist. According to the National Youth Strategy, the Ministry of Youth and Sport is responsible for establishing a single and comprehensive monitoring system. The Ministry, the Government Working Group for the Implementation of the Strategy, and the Youth Council, are in charge of performing regular annual evaluation.⁹¹ Evaluation reports about the implementation of the National Youth Strategy Action

⁹¹ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/serbia/16-evidence-based-youth-policy>

Plan indicate to what extent certain results have been achieved. These reports were published once per year, and the most recent published in August 2021 covers the five years (2015-2020). The report states that the result formulated as a 'developed functional and sustainable system of career guidance and counselling for youth' has a relatively high completion percentage estimated at 74%. The data obtained from monitoring are available to be used for further strategic planning in the area. Research on Position and Needs of Youth in Serbia is published yearly and it monitors also the level of access of young people to CGC services as well as the CGC services most frequently used by young people.

There are several studies on the guidance system generally and the provision of services in specific sectors. One of them, 'Feasibility study regarding the founding of the national resource centre for career guidance and counselling in Serbia and further development of career guidance and counselling system in Serbia' was conducted in 2014 as a part of the project funded by the European Delegation to the Republic of Serbia. There have been several other research studies conducted mostly in the CSOs and academic sectors.

The 3-year monitoring of CGC system was provided only within the process of monitoring implementation of the Law on Dual Education. According to its transitional article, the Law on Dual Education needs to undergo a total revision following its initial implementation period. The series of research was organised by SDC to report on the implementation of Serbia's dual education system and provide data to be used in policymaking and continuous system development. The evidence obtained through surveys was combined with a consultation process involving Serbian stakeholders from the education and employment sectors.

According to one of the reports, most companies participating in dual vocational education and training programmes also participate in career guidance and counselling activities (65%).⁹² Another report mentions that only 65% of students involved in dual VET report having sufficient guidance before making their choice. Research also finds that those students report they had enough information before starting with work-based learning and concludes that the shortfall seems to be resolved before the program begins. Focus groups organised with companies, donors and schools revealed that most stakeholders (93%-100%) think that CGC for dual education needs to be improved. Hence the authors recommended rethinking how the career guidance and counselling system will work in the future, given the fact that it needs to operate in partnership with companies and support students before their transition into secondary education.⁹³

Insights about the channels students use to acquire career information from the same research show that students typically find out about their secondary school profile from the elementary school, either from teachers, the secondary school open-door event, or informational presentations. Peers are also an important source of information, as is the Internet. Comparison among the two cohorts of students, those in dual education and those in regular secondary vocational education and training programmes, revealed some differences. It showed that for students who ended up in dual education schools' information sources are much more important, whereas students from secondary VET are more likely to find information on the internet and from the Information Guidebook on Secondary Education. Both groups report using information from peers more than from family members.⁹⁴

There are no recent studies on the cost-effectiveness of the CGC measures. The findings of a survey conducted by the Belgrade Open School in 2013 show a positive correlation between the receiving of

⁹² Ursula Renold et al., Implementation of the Serbian Law on Dual Education - Second Report on Barriers and Drivers in the Implementation Phase, ETH Zurich Chair of Education Systems, CES Studies No 4, June 2020, <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000441561>

⁹³ Ursula Renold et al., Implementation of the Serbian Law on Dual Education - Reflection Report: Drivers and Barriers in the Implementation Phase, ETH Zurich Chair of Education Systems, CES Studies No 19, September 2021

⁹⁴ Ibidem

career guidance and counselling (hereinafter referred to as CGC) services and the increase of employability and employment of young people.⁹⁵

The efforts were made to promote the implementation of Standards for career guidance and counselling in a coordinated manner through the NQF Council's Recommendations for Implementation of the Plan for Application of the Standards. The plan includes measures, activities, responsible institutions (such as ministries, NES, the Chamber of Commerce, universities, schools, youth offices, and the Agency for Qualifications), a time frame, estimated resources, and monitoring mechanisms. The measures that are envisaged include promotion of the standards, application of the standards through the development of tools and instruments (for example, self-assessment checklists) and expert support (e.g. training programmes), initiation of changes in procedures among different sectors (accreditation of continuous professional development programmes for teachers, social workers, and youth workers, accreditation of higher education institutions, and development of NES yearly programmes). The Agency for Qualifications, supported by the BOS, was recognised as responsible for monitoring the plan. Within the Plan, the role for monitoring this Plan was assigned to the Agency for Qualifications. So far, one report on implementation was developed in late 2020, whereas a report for 2021 has not been developed yet.

⁹⁵ Djuric, M. Kljajic, T. (2014), Career that fits youth – improvement of the methodology for measuring the effects of career guidance and counselling. Belgrade Open School. Belgrade available at <https://www.bos.rs/en/career-guidance-and-counseling>

9. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Summary of Key Findings

The existing policy framework in education, employment, and youth recognises diverse career development support mechanisms and clearly outlines responsible institutions with their roles identified and differentiated depending on the priority target groups. The Action Plan related to the comprehensive overall strategic document for CGC expired in 2014. The standards for GGC are recognised in strategic and regulatory documents as a framework for the quality assurance of the career development support system in all areas. Stakeholders and providers of career development support activities cooperate at the national and local levels. However, this cooperation is task or project based.

The well-developed regulatory framework establishes a solid base for various services. Teams composed of teachers and professional associates are supposed to offer the most considerable portion of the CGC activities in secondary schools and professional orientation in elementary schools primarily as extracurricular and non-mandatory activities. There are no precise recent data about their work, but available evidence shows that the extent and quality of the services offered to students vary significantly. CGC in dual education programmes is additionally encouraged but mainly seen as a tool for promoting enrolment in dual VET and supporting the success of WBL programmes. Optional subject Civic Education offers limited curricular coverage of career development-related topics. The number and quality of career guidance services offered to students vary depending on the capacities. Some higher education institutions started with introducing elective modules on career management skills (CMS); however, further efforts are needed to promote CMS development.

National Employment Service is the key career development support service provider for the unemployed and employed citizens within its registry. However, limited resources and low ICT usage impede more extensive and targeted outreach. The dominant career guidance mindset is to prevent wrong occupational choices and match skills supply to the labour market demand. Other career development service providers are youth offices, civil society organisations and projects that demonstrate flexibility in tailoring approaches to target group needs. Lack of professional career practitioners, sustainability and continuity in service provision hinder their development.

The key career development support service providers for employed persons are companies' HR departments. Collective agreements available for public administration workers guarantee professional development, but no support in career guidance is foreseen. The involvement of employers' associations is limited to training. Small and medium-sized enterprises fall behind the large ones in offering career development support to their workers. There is an increasing need for services for a growing group of self-employed that is left unattended and for those employed in the informal economy.

The funding of career development support activities is provided from the central budget, grants and donations from international organisations or private sources. MoLESVA and MoYS plan sources for active labour market measures implemented by the NES and programmes delivered by youth offices and CSOs to encourage youth employability. The budget of the MoESTD and provincial educational authorities plans for covering teachers' and professional associates' salaries without incentivising CGC activities. Action Plan for Education Development Strategy foresees career guidance activities but states that no additional sources are needed. Employment Strategy anticipates introducing a training voucher system, but no mention of vouchers for career development support. Investments in the innovation of the resources available for practitioners for daily work are not regularly planned, but rather financed through donor-supported projects. Obtaining the accreditation and the status of publicly recognised organisers for adult education, career guidance, and recognition of prior learning, as the option stipulated under the current strategic and regulatory framework, is expected to position VET schools, civil society organisation and private providers in the market, as career development service providers and assure additional funding.

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

registered with the NES. Data also show that people with disabilities, older employees, employees preparing for retirement, migrants, are less likely to be recognised by career guidance practitioners. As high as 54,8% of young people stated that they have not participated in any career guidance and counselling activities, which shows that access to career development support remains a challenge even for a general population of young people.

Due to an urge to shift online as caused by pandemics, almost all service providers adjusted their career development support services to the online or hybrid format, and some new ones were launched. The action plan for Education Development Strategy defines several indicators related to increasing digital competencies, but none specifies eGuidance or similar. On the other hand, there is an evident need among young people to seek online career development support.

The purpose of the Standards for career guidance and counselling services is to provide guidelines on how to develop services, programmes, organisational procedures, competencies of the practitioners so that the goals and outcomes are focused on the development of career management skills, and to evaluate, self-evaluate, and enhance existing programmes and services. Strategic documents in education, employment and youth envisage the implementation of standards, mostly through promotion. The qualifications of CGC practitioners vary as there are no master's or bachelor's degrees or at least short studies programmes and no licencing mechanisms. Nevertheless, most of the programmes for training of teachers and other practitioners offered in Serbia are in line with the standards, although this alignment is still not set as a mandatory requirement despite recent initiatives.

Standards for the production and delivery of quality careers related information are stipulated within the Standards for career guidance and counselling services. Numerous web-based materials providing career information are available, but they are neither comprehensive nor integrated. Another challenge is the usability and youth-friendliness of some information. Monitoring of career development support is done at the level of each system based on the indicators set out in action plans or projects, without aggregating all available data. Efforts to monitor the implementation of standards in a coordinated manner have been in place but need further impetus to ensure the continuity of data gathering.

Three priority policy areas to look at

- 1) **Coordination and cooperation.** Identify an **inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral body** by building on one of the existing structures and mandate it to coordinate career development support policies and practices in a system approach, to assure structured long-term coordination across different sectors and steer the development of reforms in coordination, services, funding, access, use of technology in career guidance, and quality assurance. Focus the work of the working group around the adaptation of all services to the CGC standards and monitoring implementation of all 4 standards' elements primarily in education, employment and youth sector.
- 2) **Capacity building for access.** Assure access to career education and career guidance and counselling **for all students** from primary till higher education and for more unemployed people. Build capacities of career guidance practitioners and teams from education, employment, and youth services in line with the CGC standards to tackle the issue of high numbers of young people without access to CGC and high numbers of unemployed and inactive; thereby helping young people in Serbia to deal with continuous experience of difficulties in accessing the labour market, to find a stable job and remain in employment on the basis of career management skills.
- 3) **Use of Technology.** Review existing online and digital services for CGC and especially **career information**, in education (qualifications, educational profiles, schools, etc.), employment (classification and description of occupations, labour market information), and youth organisations (also from civil society and donor projects) and develop a plan for **integrating services into a one-stop entry platform** in the medium to long term. Involve user groups to ensure the user-friendliness of services. Build on platforms planned in Education and Employment Strategy.

Elaborated 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:

Policy framework

Short-term

- Review, revise and adopt again a Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling with Action Plan or similar strategic document as a base for inter sectorial cooperation (e.g. programme), with particular emphasis to establish a coordination body at the national level
- Continue with promoting Standards for career guidance and counselling services in strategic and regulatory framework covering education, employment, and youth

Medium term to long term

- Introduce CGC in the strategic and regulatory framework governing system for social protection

Coordination and Cooperation

Short-term

- Identify an interministerial body mandated to coordinate career development support policies and practices by building on one of the existing working groups comprising of ministries (education, employment, youth, health, social policy), National Employment Service, social partners, civil society, research, (e.g. NQF Council, Agency for Qualifications Working Group for Career Guidance and Counselling, reviving the Working Group for Development of Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling Services under a more general coordination mandate)
- Focus the work of the working group in the beginning around the adaptation of all services to the CGC standards; learn from the approach of the DECIDE project and others
- Coordinate implementation of Standards and update the Recommendations for the implementation of the plan for application of the standards initiated by the Council for the NQF
- Develop blueprints for local cooperation and coordination for career education and career guidance in education as guideline for educational institutions, NES, parents, employer organisations, municipalities, youth workers, Local Employment Councils etc.; build on good practice like the local Council of Partners for Career Guidance and Counselling and local networks functioning within the E2E project

Medium term to long-term

- Envisage participation of vocational education and training providers in local employment councils to foster coordination in providing career development support services at the local level
- Within the framework of the interministerial working group, identify how social partners and sectorial organisations can support SMEs in career development support of workers. Consider enhancing coordinated engagement of social partners and sectorial organisations in providing skills needs assessments and forecasting (for sectors) as important labour market information needed for career information activities. Facilitate cooperation with adult learning and vocational education and training institutions for continuous professional development (in line with existing support for WBL cooperations).
- Establish local career guidance councils in all cities and municipalities

Services

Short term

Use potential of career education and career guidance and counselling to support achieving the indicators set out in the Strategy for Development of Education: to increase the coverage rate, lower dropout rates at all levels of education, increase transition between educational levels and decrease the rate of NEETs and promote standards based on career management skills.

- Collect the data on and review the professional orientation model for elementary schools against the career management skills framework, update it accordingly
- Collect the data on and review existing practices in general secondary schools, against the career management skills framework, update it accordingly
- Strengthen career management component of the curricula for Civic Education in elementary and secondary school and curriculum for entrepreneurship in secondary VET schools, in line with activity of reviewing the status and position of the Civic Education subject in the education system and redefining the method of professional development of teachers of Civic Education foreseen in Strategy.
- Introduce minimum number of class hours (razredna nastava) to be devoted to career conversations and fostering learning about careers from different life experiences. Map the potential for introducing career development related topics into diverse existing subjects and curricula. Build on the existing good practice examples of integrating CGC in classes recognised by Euroguidance and BOS annual competitions.
- Further promote and build on the experience of using a 'Career Portfolio' from dual VET for all other career learning in all other educational settings, as a tool that belongs to the learner and accompanies them throughout life (as key tool for lifelong CGC that facilitates seamless CG between providers and life stages)
- Extend CGC services in dual VET from the current focus which is more about coaching to secure WBL is successful, support learners in staying in their chosen path, towards developing career management skills (as per standards), because especially VET students will have to deal with multiple transitions in their work life, so they need to be prepared for lifelong transitions
- Review existing practices in general secondary and non-dual VET against the career management skills framework, update it accordingly; in particular ensure work-based learning experience (trial days in companies and workshops of VET schools, etc.) as real hands-on experience allows for creating a picture of oneself in a profession in the future and helps assess inter alia interest in combination with solid LMI as basis for decision making
- Encourage CGC practices at adult education institutions in line with the career management skills framework, and provide for a clear and approachable process of accreditation of CGC programmes to ensure a high quality minimum level of standardisation.
- Review career development support at the universities against CGC standards. Introduce more career management skills courses and explore the potentials for making them a mandatory activity throughout university studies.

In line with Employment Strategy goals to use career guidance and counselling to enhance human capital and social inclusion and contribute knowledge-based economic growth:

- Review the current NES approach against the CGC standards and widen the NES traditional approach from matching or adjusting skills supply to business needs in the market by accompanying this with preventive service offers for all citizens for career management skills development, thereby building on the well-functioning and variety of reactive measures such as

self-efficacy training, a workshop for overcoming stress, Job Club, training for entrepreneurship development etc.;

- Develop special services for NEETs, especially for rural areas, in line with CGC standards
 - Create partnerships for outreaching to vulnerable groups and in particular NEETs (NGOs, social workers, youth workers etc.) to provide access to career guidance; build on the concept of 'youth offices' at municipality level to provide multi-service offers from youth, social, CGC to health services directed towards youth in need
 - Further develop local mobile teams composed of representatives from different sectors under the coordination of local self-government, that proved efficient in outreaching to vulnerable young Roma people in the GIZ project to provide access to career guidance;
 - Build services around the needs of these groups, as it is not just about activation, but about being part of society; hence, it requires a bundle of different services to be designed in a synergetic way together; soft re-entry opportunities into the world of learning, re-learning to have a rhythm with starting hours of an activity etc. are needed; support for the family etc.
 - Introduce the modality for enabling the civil society organisation offering career development support following CGC Standards to obtain the status of employment service providers and manage to provide sustainable career guidance services to young NEETs and other groups at risk of social exclusion; assure synergy with accreditation process promoted by the Agency for Qualifications to set clear conditions and criteria for ensuring practices in line with the requirements set out by the Standards
 - Use the potentials of technology and the fact that even passive young people use social media to offer more online CGC services, as there is an evident need among young NEETs to seek online career development support. Place the accurate and up-to-date labour market information, framed in an approachable way understandable to young people, via social media platforms, provide more email and chat-based career advisory support.
 - As NES must find new ways to ensure better targeting of young NEETs and other vulnerable categories, gradually increase NES capacity (e.g. engage more qualified counsellors, allocate additional funds and reach vulnerable young people while working on seasonal jobs) to promote the Youth Service Package among the younger generation.

Medium term to long-term

- Assess the options for restarting career education for all from grade one onwards as mandatory, integral part of curricula. Introduce new subject on career management.
- Provide special services to workers in non-standards forms of employment; learn from practices such as those of the civil society organisation StartIT

Funding

Short-term

- Ensure funding for professional staff at local level in municipalities, e.g. for multi-service 'youth offices' aimed primarily at reaching vulnerable groups like NEETs
- Identify funding sources to support SMEs and their staff in accessing career development support services
- Make funds allocated for career guidance and counselling in education, employment and youth sectors explicit to be able to monitor input against output and outcomes on the bases of a baseline that should be defined to start real M&E activities;
- Build on innovative ideas like the client participation in the financing of the service of the Belgrade University, and the Belgrade Open Schools' Career Awards that financially incentivize good practices in CGC

Medium term to long-term

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

- Review further the targeting of active labour market policy measures and priority co-funding of local employment planning documents of local self-governments in underdeveloped areas to focus more on providing career development support to NEETs and other vulnerable groups.
- Extend the idea of the training voucher system currently presented in the Employment Strategy to increase access to training for the unemployed, also to workers/employed. This will enhance workers' career development and help them upgrade their skills in order to remain employable and active.
- Include career counselling and career guidance voucher system or similar incentives for unemployed and employed/workers to be able to access to professional support and encouragement for lifelong career management.

Access

Short-term

- Build capacities of career guidance practitioners from education, employment, and youth services in line with the CGC standards based on career management skills to increase the number and quality of services offered and assure access to career development support services in education, employment, and youth. Evaluate capacity building programmes regularly to assess if they lead to the development of career management skills among the end users, as well as practitioners.
- Assure access to career education and career guidance and counselling for all students from primary till higher education in line with the CGC standards to tackle the issue of high numbers of young unemployed and inactive; thereby helping young people in Serbia to deal with continuous experience of difficulties in accessing the labour market, to find a stable job and remain in employment on the basis of career management skills
- Explore ways to offer career education and career counselling (individual or group counselling) at least once per year to all students, not just those enrolled in dual education programmes

Medium term to long-term

- Develop special services for individuals working in the informal economy like outreach strategies making them aware of their possibilities to access qualifications, decent work, and benefit from social protection. Explore ways to establish and coordinate career development support services also for those in non-standard forms of employment or short term-contracts, outsourced workers, platform workers etc., as research shows many positive effects for the company (innovation, adaptation, competitiveness) and the individual (motivation, satisfaction, competence).
- Encourage special career development support initiatives for rural populations and individuals performing domestic work, particularly women.

Use of technology

Short-term

- Review existing online and digital services for CGC in educational institutions, employment (e.g. on LMI) and youth organisations (also from civil society and donor projects) and develop a plan for integrating services into a one-stop entry platform in the medium to long term
- Leverage on ICT to support CGC practitioners in educational institutions to get access to latest tools, materials etc. in an effective and cost-efficient way
- Update the interactive online platform 'Guide for choosing an occupation' for elementary school pupils with the recent developments in VET including dual education profiles, and ensure continuous updating

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

Medium-term to long-term

- Develop one-stop entry platform catering for the needs of different actors (students, teachers, parents, CGC practitioners, companies, etc.) with different sections and preparation of services according to their needs, to accompany face-to-face services in a synergetic way, and bring services from education, employment and youth together in a system for career development support – all in line with the national CGC standards
- Involve user groups to ensure the user-friendliness of services

Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement

Short term

- Introduce legal objectives related to the initial and continuous professional development of career guidance practitioners' competence to be competent in delivering in line with CGC standards and in delivering online and digital services
- Accredite private and civil society organisations offering training in line with the CGC standards
- Introduce short programme studies for CGC in line with career management skills framework at the university level education, especially at those institutions offering initial education of teachers, psychology, adult education, human resources management and similar.
- Along the planned activities within the Strategy for Education to further train teachers in CGC and develop 'Professional guidelines for implementing professional orientation and CGC activities in all schools', focus also on building their capacities to facilitate career conversations in different subjects, such as literature, science, etc.
- Assure that training of RPL advisers is in line with the competencies for career guidance practitioners, in accordance with the Rulebook.
- Prepare yearly reports on the application of the CGC standards in different sectors building on the good practice of the Agency for Qualifications and BOS
- Shift from the mindset of career information provision to empowering clients, especially young and inactive, to search for relevant information, critically assess information sources, compare and collect information to be able to reach well informed career relevant decisions. Build capacities of teachers and employment counsellors to empower career management skills related to career information.

Medium term to long-term

- Develop, in line with the CGC standards, certificates, Bachelor and Master programmes for the initial and continuous professional development of career guidance practitioners
- Make career guidance a standard component of initial education of teachers, youth workers, social workers and adult educator training and education schemes. Build on the measures foreseen on the Education Development Strategy to improve initial and continual professional education of teachers.
- Provide incentives to CG practitioners and SCOs to establish a CG association which is in many countries a driving force for system enhancement and quality assurance
- Establish a comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluation in line with the CGC standards; build on practices for monitoring inputs to allow for measuring outputs and outcomes in the future
- Closely monitor implementation of CGC related activities in Strategy for Development of Education, especially teachers' training, and the vision of access for all pupils, students, and adults

ACRONYMS

ALMMs	Active Labour Market Measures
BOS	Belgrade Open School
CGC	Career guidance and counselling
CMS	Career Management Skills
CSO	Civil society organisation
CV	curriculum vitae
DECIDE	Dialogue on Employment, Creation, Initiative, and Dual Education
E2E	Education to Employment
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
HR	Human resources
ILO	International Labor Organization
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMI	Labour Market Information
MoESTD	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
MoLEVSA	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NEETs	Not in Education, Employment, or Training

NES	National Employment Service
NFESPs	Non-formal education service providers
NQFS	National Qualifications Framework in Serbia
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
VET	Vocational Education and Training

ANNEX – LIST OF DOCUMENTS USED FOR DESK RESEARCH

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