

INVESTING IN CAREER GUIDANCE

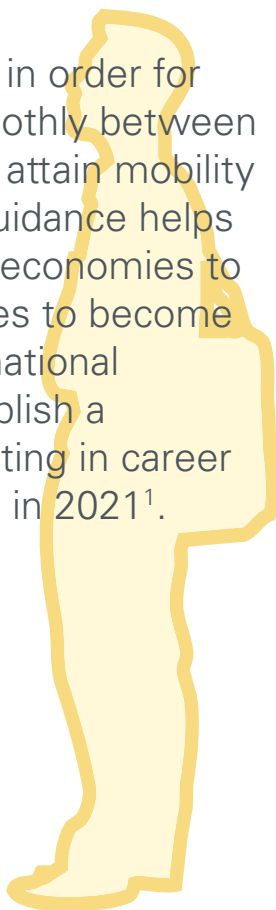
Joint statement of the Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance



Effective career guidance is critical in order for people to be able to transition smoothly between learning and work, and for them to attain mobility within the labour market. Career guidance helps individuals to reach their potential, economies to become more efficient and societies to become fairer. In December 2019, six international organisations came together to publish a booklet on the importance of investing in career guidance, which was then updated in 2021¹.



¹ See <https://www.elgpn.eu/glossary>



This collaboration reflects the growing need for guidance now that people remain in education and training longer, career landscapes and pathways are becoming more complex and less predictable (due to artificial intelligence, automation and the need for greener economies all changing the demand for skills), and increasing pressure for people to continually upskill and reskill.

Existing evidence gives policy makers confidence that investment in guidance can provide positive economic, educational and social returns to both individuals and society. International data shows, however, that in many countries access to guidance is insufficient, particularly for those who need it the most.

BOX 1: Understanding the term 'career'

The term 'career' is still often understood exclusively as employment related. In contrast to this narrow understanding, this booklet stresses the need to see careers as the interaction of work and other roles throughout people's lives, including how a person balances paid and unpaid work, learning and education. This wider definition also explains why career management skills must include personal development, social and emotional skills, as core competence elements, because it is not possible to separate personal and career biographies and development. They are intertwined with and influence each other.



WHAT IS CAREER GUIDANCE?

Career guidance² describes the services that help people of any age to make the educational, training and occupational choices that are meaningful for them over a lifetime. It helps them to acquire and develop the capacity to manage their careers ('career management skills').

Career guidance helps people to access information and experience that helps them to visualise and plan possible futures. It helps people grow and refine their career interests and abilities. It enables people to reflect on their own ambitions, interests, skills and talents and to relate this knowledge about who they are and apply it to who they might become in their life and their work.

Career guidance is important in education, for skills development and skills utilisation, in workforce development and human resources at places of work, social protection measures and active labour market policies. It also contributes to an individual's well-being by helping individuals deal with uncertainty, as well as preventing or responding to professional burnout and improving job satisfaction.

However, one size does not fit all when it comes to career guidance. Individuals have different levels of access to useful, relevant advice,

² Some countries use terms such as 'career counselling', 'career development', 'careers information, advice and guidance', 'vocational counselling', 'vocational guidance' or 'lifelong guidance' to refer to the range of services included here under the term 'career guidance'.

experience and resources through their personal networks and their wider responsibilities will dictate their capacity to engage in the labour market. This variation often echoes wider social inequalities as well as differences in the informality of and access to education. While empowering individuals is

BOX 2: Career management skills

Career management skills are more than being able to search and apply for jobs and to acquire the capacity to identify, source, and interpret information about the labour market and careers (career information). They also encompass transversal social and emotional skills to cope with complex challenges, such as the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and build resilience, to understand your own rights, to be able to exploit professional, community and family networks for career planning, and to gain awareness of one's own self and of cultural constraints.

key, career guidance is a shared responsibility. Some individuals will need more support than others and contextual factors such as access to quality jobs and relevant education and training are out of the sphere of influence of individuals and must be tackled by governments. Effective guidance responds to these additional needs and contexts.

More concretely, career guidance involves a range of learning activities that help people to access services, resources and experiences related to their personal development, employment and lifelong learning opportunities. These include provision of:

- career education;
- career information;
- individual and group guidance/counselling;
- skills assessments and career-related testing;
- engagement with social partners and employers; and
- experiential learning opportunities.



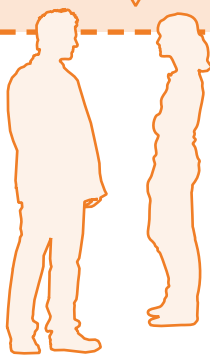
Career guidance is delivered face to face, remotely, using digital technologies, or in blended mode. Guidance is provided to people of all ages in a wide range of settings: primary and secondary schools and vocational training centres, tertiary and higher education institutions; public and private employment services; public and private career guidance centres; at workplaces, trade unions, NGOs, non-formal adult learning centres and professional bodies as well as in local community settings.

Career guidance is a continuous process throughout a person's life and provisions and services need to better reflect this. It is fundamental for young people to be able to make smooth transitions as they are presented with ever greater numbers of choices about continuing education and training. Adults, too, must engage in career development when they encounter the need to upskill, reskill or to move within the (formal/informal) labour market. They should also seek to lead active working lives as older adults through to retirement. It is not only the unemployed who can benefit from career guidance. Now more than ever, as the demand for skills is changing rapidly and career pathways are less linear or clearly mapped out, career guidance is relevant to all workers: to people in work who wish, or are required to, change jobs as well as those encountering barriers to labour market access, advancement or mobility.

A recent [IAG publication](#) focuses on why it is important that all workers have access to career guidance and how it can be most effectively designed and delivered.



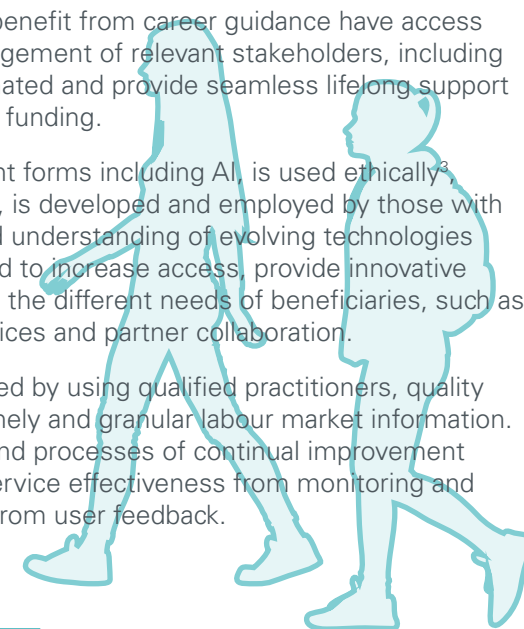
...



ORGANISING CAREER GUIDANCE

There is no single ideal way to organise career guidance in a country and policy should be adjusted to each country's needs. Countries face different socio-economic challenges and demographic trends and are culturally and institutionally diverse. Despite the high variation in contexts, career guidance systems are working well when:

- All who require or wish to benefit from career guidance have access to it. Services and the engagement of relevant stakeholders, including employers, are well-coordinated and provide seamless lifelong support with stable and appropriate funding.
- Technology, in all its different forms including AI, is used ethically³, coherently and strategically, is developed and employed by those with the relevant knowledge and understanding of evolving technologies in that career field. It is used to increase access, provide innovative services and better cater to the different needs of beneficiaries, such as through strengthening services and partner collaboration.
- Quality of services is assured by using qualified practitioners, quality assurance mechanisms, timely and granular labour market information. There are clear standards and processes of continual improvement informed by evidence on service effectiveness from monitoring and evaluation that also draws from user feedback.



³ See [IAEVG 2024 Communiqué](#)

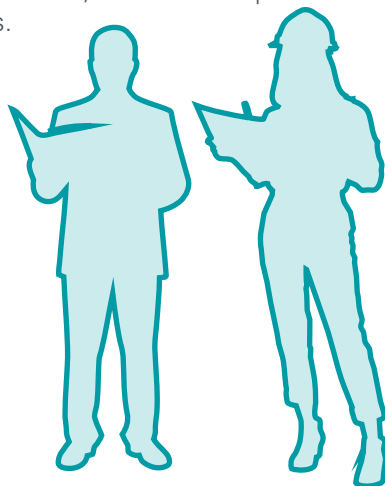
To achieve these hallmarks of an effective and efficient career guidance system, it is important to develop an intergovernmental national vision and strategy between ministries responsible for education, training, youth, social protection and employment, and to consult together with sector and employee representatives and other third sector organisations.

BOX 3: Montenegro

Montenegro has created a coherent legal framework to oversee career guidance across different sectors. The approach includes strategies for lifelong career guidance (2011-2015, 2016-2020, 2025-2030) and national career guidance standards. Career guidance is monitored and evaluated by bodies which bring together key stakeholders. To ensure systematic support for students from a young age, Montenegro has placed full-time career guidance counsellors in primary and secondary schools as well as at universities.

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/career-development-support-system-review-montenegro>

The requirement for cross-service cooperation and capacity building across a range of professionals in areas such as validation of informal and non-formal skills and outreach, to name but two, becomes especially evident when responding to the needs of long-term unemployed, inactive youth and adults, and domestic and community workers, because this poses challenges to traditional open-door services.



BOX 4: Finland

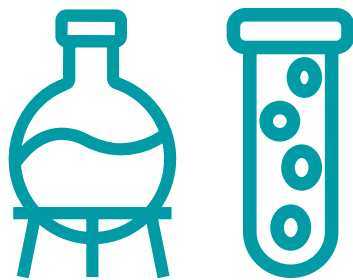
The [Ojhaamo centres](#) are one-stop guidance centres set up under the Finnish Youth Guarantee to support young people under 30 in their personal and professional development. The centres combine provision of career guidance with mental health support, social integration services, financial advice, housing support and entrepreneurship support among other provisions. While their primary focus is on young people, they also provide adult support. The centres combine the efforts of multiple public agencies and training providers and have numerous partnerships with NGOs and the private sector. Access to centres is free and users just need to walk in.



BOX 5: Chile

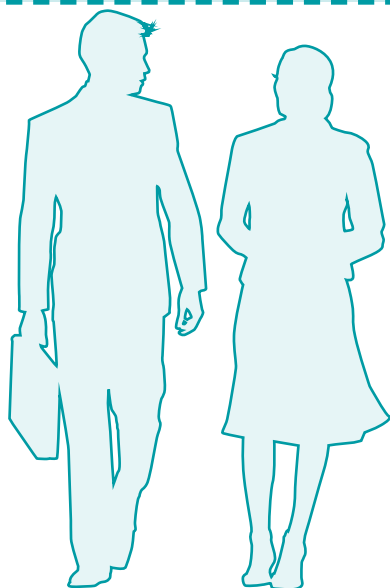
In Chile, [career guidance is structured as a multidimensional system integrated into the national school curriculum](#). It plays a formative and preventive role by supporting students' well-being and resilience; operates as a compulsory subject from year 1 to 12 of compulsory education with clearly defined objectives; and is embedded in institutional management, aligned with each school's educational and improvement plans. While the focus in years 1 to 10 is on students' personal and social development, in years 11 and 12 it shifts to vocational and professional guidance, preparing learners for transitions to higher education, TVET, or the labour market. Implementation relies on trained professionals and school staff, and is supported by annual planning and close coordination with families and communities.





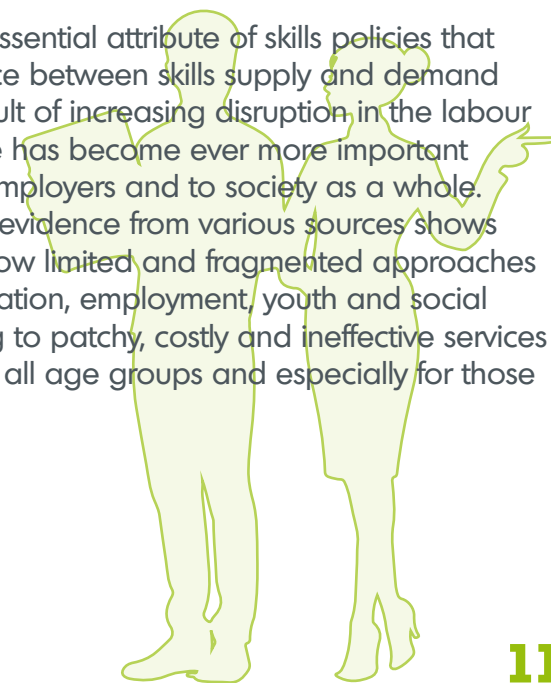
BOX 6: Ireland

In Ireland, the Whole School Approach aims to provide comprehensive guidance to students, encompassing their personal, social, educational and career development needs. It involves the entire school staff – school leaders, teachers, librarians, and other staff – who play a supporting role, with the guidance counsellor in a central and specialised role, linking policy and practice to ensure a sequence of learning experiences for students. All teachers are encouraged to integrate guidance into their lessons, highlighting the links between subjects and careers. Partnerships with businesses are common to enable students to come into direct contact with the realities of work, professionals and role models and also to set up careers weeks and fairs.



EFFECTIVE CAREER GUIDANCE IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER

Career guidance is an essential attribute of skills policies that strive for a better balance between skills supply and demand in an economy. As a result of increasing disruption in the labour market, career guidance has become ever more important to individuals, families, employers and to society as a whole. Despite growing needs, evidence from various sources shows that countries mostly follow limited and fragmented approaches to guidance in the education, employment, youth and social inclusion sectors, leading to patchy, costly and ineffective services that also fail to cater for all age groups and especially for those most in need.

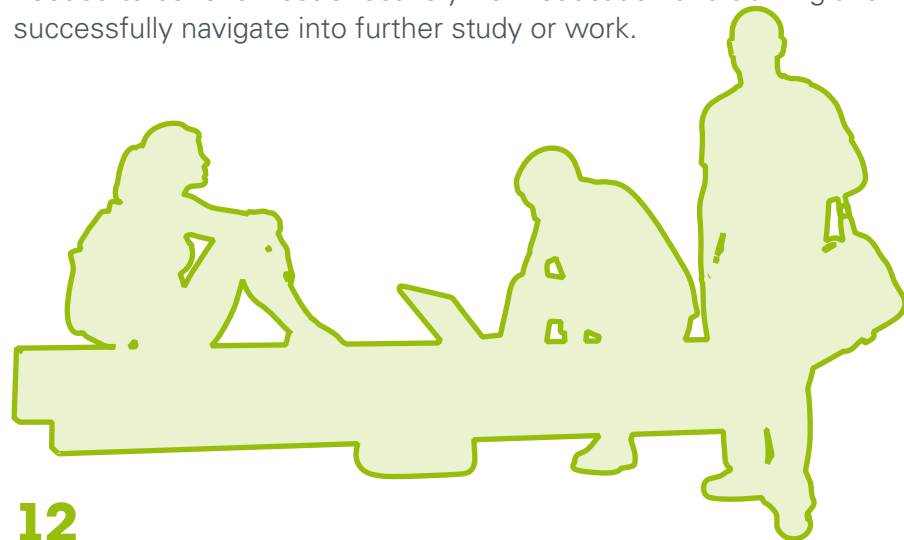


Young people...

... face growing risks of inactivity, unemployment and precarity in turbulent labour markets.

Young people routinely experience much higher unemployment, inactivity and underemployment rates than older people, a trend accentuated in periods of economic crisis. NEET rates – the share of young people not in employment, education or training – are high in many countries. Early experiences of unemployment are linked with long-term negative consequences on economic outcomes and wellbeing. Across the world, young people are entering the labour market more highly educated and trained than older generations, but for many this is not leading to smooth transitions into attractive employment.

Rapid changes in demand for labour makes decision-making about education and training options much more difficult. With many new occupations emerging and many existing ones changing or diminishing, young people need more support as they prepare themselves for work and life. Young people need support to understand the opportunities and risks and to develop the skills needed to benefit most effectively from education and training and successfully navigate into further study or work.



BOX 7: Egypt

In Egypt, career guidance centres help young people to access training for in-demand skills. Users can also access job search clubs where they are provided with training in job searches and making applications. Centres also hold job fairs that put young graduates on vocational training schemes directly in contact with local employers – [Providing career guidance to Egyptian youth through ILO job search clubs \(JSC\), in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports | International Labour Organization](#).

... need better access to effective and impartial guidance

OECD 2022 PISA data from 80 very different nations and economies, including many non-OECD middle-income countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America, show that teenage career aspirations are frequently narrow, confused and influenced by social background. Job plans are highly concentrated. In many countries, the majority of 15-year-old girls and boys say that they expect to work in one of the 10 most popular job choices. Many occupations and learning routes, e.g. apprenticeships, where available, are stereotyped or poorly understood, thus contributing to skills shortages and the risk of educational disengagement. Too few teenagers have access to the guidance they need to make informed decisions about their futures. On average, less than half of students have spoken to a career advisor and fewer than two in five have attended a job fair by the age of 15.

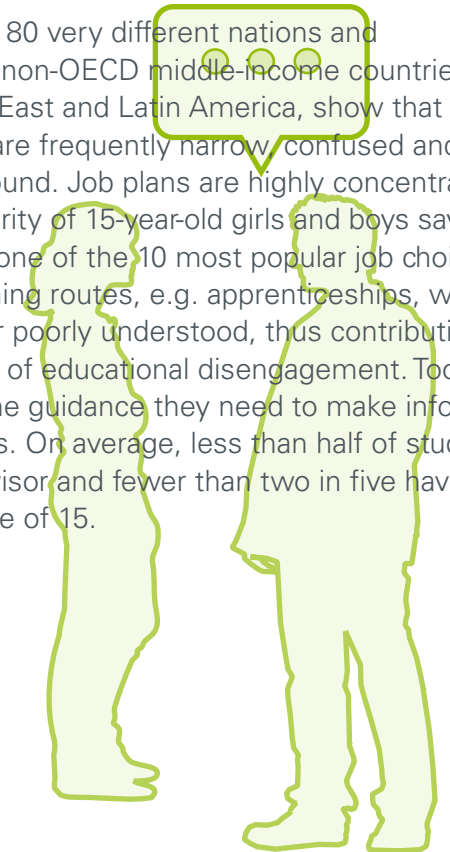


Figure 1. Percentage of 15-year-olds who have not spoken to a career advisor, PISA



Note. Data from the OECD PISA 2022 database for non-OECD countries. Percentage of students who have not spoken to a career advisor either in or out of school. Further data available at the [OECD Teenage Career Readiness Dashboard](#).



BOX 8: Denmark

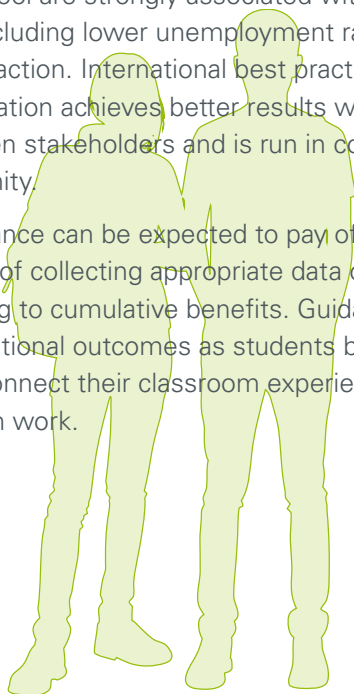
In Denmark, the [eGuidance system](#) targets learners in secondary and tertiary education and adults who seek assistance with their career management and skills development. The service is part of a national guidance portal that contains comprehensive labour market information. Online chats are particularly popular with young people.

Young people...

... can be expected to enjoy long-term benefits from engaging in career guidance, even in times of economic disruption.

Extensive analysis of national longitudinal datasets in multiple countries shows that the extent to which school-age teenagers think about their future in work and whether they explore or experience potential future workplaces whilst still in school are strongly associated with employment gains in young adulthood, including lower unemployment rates, higher wages and greater job satisfaction. International best practice also shows that career guidance in education achieves better results when it is a shared responsibility between stakeholders and is run in connection with workplaces and the community.

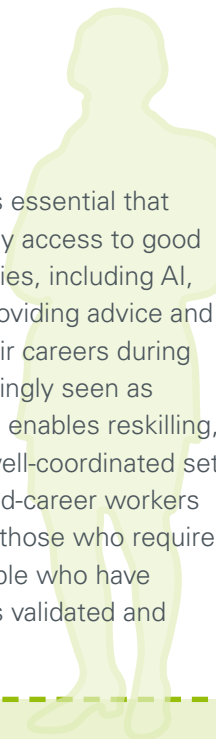
Investment in effective guidance can be expected to pay off over the long term, hence the importance of collecting appropriate data over time to isolate the key factors leading to cumulative benefits. Guidance is also associated with better educational outcomes as students become more motivated to learn as they connect their classroom experiences more clearly with future success in work.



Adults...

... are facing radically changing job markets.

With labour markets restructuring in many countries, it is essential that people in work, as well as adults seeking work, have easy access to good quality guidance, especially as rapidly-evolving technologies, including AI, bring significant uncertainty. Support must go beyond providing advice and help individuals develop the skills needed to manage their careers during periods of instability. Reskilling and upskilling are increasingly seen as integral parts of working life and active ageing. Guidance enables reskilling, upskilling and mobility, especially when integrated in a well-coordinated set of policies and incentives. It is especially important to mid-career workers wanting or needing to move within the labour market or those who require re-orientation after illness or a leave of absence and people who have migrated between countries and want to have their skills validated and recognised.



BOX 9: South Africa

[South Africa's public employment service \(Khetha\)](#) provides career guidance for all citizens regardless of geographical position or socio-economic status through a weekly live radio programme in all 10 official languages. In a 30-minute broadcast, it covers career-related matters relevant to both young people and adults whether in or out of the workforce, encouraging listeners to make use of South Africa's national career helpline. It reaches a largely rural population aged 15 to 65 (3.1 million listeners per week) in a cost-effective way.



BOX 10: Austria

Fit2work in Austria is a nationwide scheme designed to help adults with health problems to stay in work or find employment. It offers counselling and therapy and develops an action plan for employability with its clients. It is a Ministry of Social Affairs project and has a strong link with career guidance. The process is divided into steps that are adapted to client needs: basic information, initial clarification of the situation, basic check to register the client's health situation with an occupational physician/work psychologist and case management. Clients are coached over several months and provided with tangible measures and support options.

BOX 11: Slovenia

Slovenia provides coordinated support through cooperation between the Public Employment Service and Centres for Social Welfare. Joint assessments are conducted to address employment barriers and social issues, enabling access to social assistance, career guidance and organised care. Social activation programmes are designed to motivate those in long-term unemployment to actively participate in society and improve their well-being, with Public Employment Service employment counsellors responsible for follow-up.

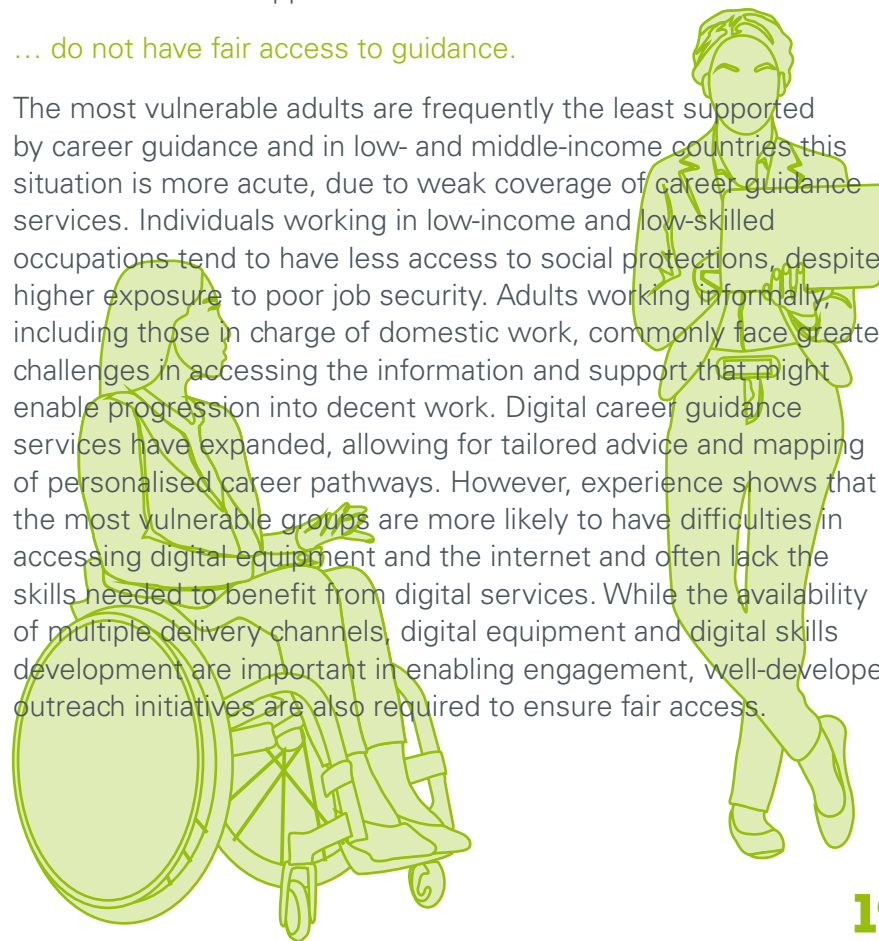
... are not always aware of service availability and entitlement.

According to one major European study, only one in four adults ever uses a career guidance service. This figure is even lower among individuals with lower levels of qualifications, whose jobs are more likely to be precarious. Awareness of services can be low and adults may be confused by what support they are entitled to.

This is problematic as surveys show there is substantial demand for career guidance from adults and that most recognise that career guidance is helpful in finding suitable jobs, education and training courses and other opportunities.

... do not have fair access to guidance.

The most vulnerable adults are frequently the least supported by career guidance and in low- and middle-income countries this situation is more acute, due to weak coverage of career guidance services. Individuals working in low-income and low-skilled occupations tend to have less access to social protections, despite higher exposure to poor job security. Adults working informally, including those in charge of domestic work, commonly face greater challenges in accessing the information and support that might enable progression into decent work. Digital career guidance services have expanded, allowing for tailored advice and mapping of personalised career pathways. However, experience shows that the most vulnerable groups are more likely to have difficulties in accessing digital equipment and the internet and often lack the skills needed to benefit from digital services. While the availability of multiple delivery channels, digital equipment and digital skills development are important in enabling engagement, well-developed outreach initiatives are also required to ensure fair access.



EFFECTIVE CAREER GUIDANCE EMPOWERS PEOPLE, BY...

BOX 12: Kazakhstan

Mobile employment centres in Kazakhstan bring together representatives from a range of ministerial bodies and sector organisations to help raise awareness of government training and employment schemes. The centres are located in popular public places like shopping malls and railway stations, providing career guidance for jobseekers.

BOX 13: India

In India, the Kudumbashree programme for women's empowerment in Kerala has successfully incorporated career guidance with comprehensive support mechanisms to create sustainable pathways for women's economic and social development. The scheme operates through a three-tier community network structure that delivers targeted vocational training, skill development initiatives, and entrepreneurship support, backed by microfinance facilities. Career guidance has a community-based approach, combining local knowledge with formal training courses.



- responding to individual, family and community needs, offering a professional service across multiple channels to increase accessibility through self-help platforms and tools, face-to-face, online and phone services including mobile services in the community and integrated service centres. Services can reach more users by empowering them through group sessions to form networks and collaborate with peers and others who act as sources for support and resources. Innovation through the use of existing and evolving information technology for guidance enhances availability, but this must not be at the expense of quality or equitable access. Quality guidance has a long-term outlook of having people develop the skills and knowledge they need to manage their own lives and careers. These career management skills serve as a cross-cutting competence that has potential benefits across diverse contexts and beyond a single job or stage in life, justifying policies promoting their early acquisition at school.
- forming a regular part of education and training, working in alliance with teachers and trainers to infuse syllabuses which integrate career learning. It begins early (from primary school) as continuous learning activity each year to develop career management skills, helping children see the link between learning and the changing world of work. Guidance is a shared responsibility within schools. In workplaces, trade unions may be well equipped to provide initial access to guidance.

- facilitating personal development and enabling people to get to know themselves, their talents, interests and potential, encouraging learners to consider the breadth of the labour market, including emerging occupations, and challenging common assumptions or stereotypes about jobs and careers.
- making use of well-trained professionals who facilitate the development of career management skills needed by all to manage their careers. Effective guidance provides user-friendly access to learning experiences and reliable labour market information and skills intelligence but also enables people to confidently make sense of the data. It provides direct contact with qualified career guidance professionals, and with the world of work.
- directly addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. Quality guidance is accessible to all young people and adults but is targeted especially at those in greatest need of support. It recognises different forms of social disadvantage and compensates for weaker access to relevant information and support through social networks. There is good reason to understand why certain groups such as migrants, ethnic minorities, rural populations, older people, workers in informal sectors, people with disabilities, low-skilled workers, inactive young people, sexual minorities, people with a low socio-economic status and the unemployed face additional barriers in visualising and planning their careers. Consequently, effective guidance makes use of a range of approaches, including outreach activities, to ensure that it is relevant and accessible to different people with different needs. Services can also be offered anonymously to safeguard privacy and attract vulnerable users.

BOX 14: Greece

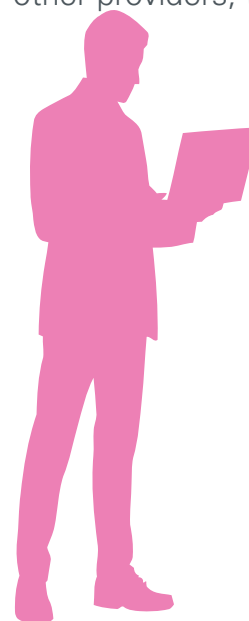
In Greece, the Pan-Hellenic Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Work Integration ([PEPSAEE](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-greece-0#guidance-for-persons-with-disabilities)) has set up supported employment offices for mental health service users. PEPSAEE is a scientific, not-for-profit organisation that aims for social inclusion of individuals with psychosocial difficulties, specialising in supporting, coordinating and empowering rehabilitation and back-to-work initiatives.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-greece-0#guidance-for-persons-with-disabilities>

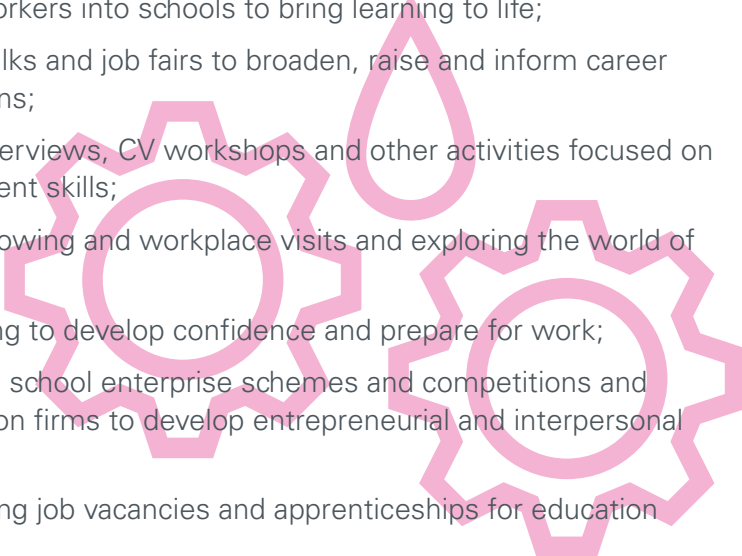
CONNECTING WITH THE WORLD OF WORK

Employer and social partner engagement enriches career guidance. When people in work cooperate with schools and other providers, there is a better understanding of the working world in all its forms. This is particularly important for young people. It allows access to new and trustworthy information and experiences that broaden and deepen career aspirations. First-hand encounters are powerful learning opportunities. Direct experience of workplaces helps individuals to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to access available work.

Involving employers in career guidance is a very effective means of helping them to signal demand for labour. During periods of turbulence in the job market, it is especially important for guidance to be enriched through first-hand access to people in work. In an uncertain world, employers and experienced workers are best placed to advise future job seekers on how their workplaces and occupational skill requirements are changing.



Employer, experienced professionals and social partner involvement gives learners direct exposure to the world of work. This could include:

- 
- inviting volunteers, such as experienced professionals, mentors or youth workers into schools to bring learning to life;
 - career talks and job fairs to broaden, raise and inform career aspirations;
 - mock interviews, CV workshops and other activities focused on recruitment skills;
 - job shadowing and workplace visits and exploring the world of work;
 - mentoring to develop confidence and prepare for work;
 - local and school enterprise schemes and competitions and production firms to develop entrepreneurial and interpersonal skills;
 - advertising job vacancies and apprenticeships for education leavers;
 - work placements/internships and work tasters so that students gain first-hand experience of workplaces;
 - outreach to promote upskilling and reskilling at work;
 - regular career reviews alongside performance evaluations to steer workers towards relevant training and internal career opportunities.

Effective engagement of employers, experienced professionals and social partners is authentic, frequent, personalised, varied, embedded in careers education, and begins at primary cycle. It can be especially effective in challenging gendered assumptions and other forms of stereotyping about occupations, in broadening career



aspirations and enhancing the flow of talent into the labor market. PISA data show, however, that in many countries fewer than half of all young people take part in one of the easiest and most effective forms of employer engagement: the job or careers fair. Creating experiences like community-based volunteering, internships and entrepreneurship programmes also help develop important career management skills.

In workplaces, trade unions can play an important role in facilitating access to, or even directly providing, career guidance to their members. They can also work with schools and training providers to enable access to professionals from different fields who can act as role models or mentors. Trade unions play a key role together with employers organisations, such as sectoral councils or other coordination units that raise the profile of career development work when building training policies and human resources.

BOX 15: Sector Skills Bodies Engagement in Career Guidance

Sector skills bodies are organisations that can bring together governments, employers, workers and training providers within economic sectors to define sectoral strategies for skills development and support their implementation. They are directly involved in career guidance across various countries to various degrees. Well-established bodies such as Industry Skills Councils in Australia and New Zealand have a direct role in career guidance systems, with strategic roles in addressing structural transformations, youth unemployment and community development. The [Manufacturing, Engineering and Related services Sector Education and Training Authority \(merSETA\)](#) in South Africa is involved in developing career guidance frameworks, digital guidance tools and service delivery, running information sessions and events for young people and partnerships with TVET colleges to bring in career guidance, including through professional development for staff.

BOX 16: Inspiring the Future

Operating in Iceland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the [Inspiring the Future programme](#) is designed to make it quick, cheap and easy for school staff to find local volunteers from the world of work to support the career development of students. Employee volunteers register their interest, sharing personal and professional details to enable better matching with student needs. Schools are then able to search a secure database to identify and connect with volunteers. In the UK, the scheme has been responsible for five million interactions with students. Campaigns run through the programme might focus on a locality, student characteristics or economic sectors.

BOX 17: Sweden

Sweden has recently launched a [‘transition package’](#) based on an agreement between trade unions and private-sector employers. It provides eligible workers with opportunities for career transition and skills development throughout their working lives. It allows users access to basic support for career transitions, including career guidance and provides a study allowance for retraining and further education. Job security and transition councils offer the service and there is a search tool for workers to find the correct provider based on their employer and employment status. However, no evaluation of guidance provided within this extensive but recent initiative has been made available yet. Newly arrived migrants and other unemployed individuals, especially the long-term unemployed, can access career guidance through the [Swedish Public Employment Service](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

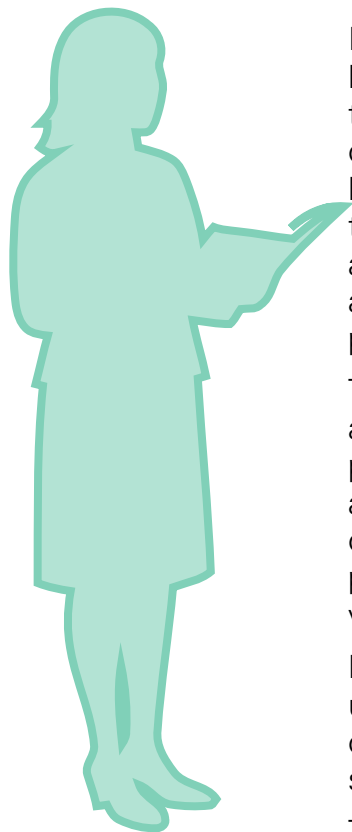
Survey data from 2022 shows that more than half of teenagers around the world plan on working in just ten occupations and that career aspirations are heavily influenced by socio-economic status, gender and migrant background.

Teenage uncertainty about career ambitions – which is associated with poorer than expected adult job outcomes – increased from 24 % to 39 % in OECD countries between 2000 and 2022.

Across OECD countries, around 60 % of students say that they will be working in one of the professions (major group 2 in the International Standardised Classification of Occupations) by the age of 30, but this sector rarely employs more than 20 % of workers.

Creating learning experiences out of the classroom supports the development of interests and competences and helps overcome career and education decisions tied to socio-economic status or gender.

European surveys show that careers linked to vocational education routes often suffer from negative stereotypes.



Reviews of analysis of national longitudinal datasets show that better-than-expected adult employment outcomes are routinely associated with how school-age teenagers think about their future careers, whether they actively explore possible employment and the experiences that they have of potential future workplaces.

There are wage premiums for young adults of 5-10 % linked to them participating in career development activities in their teens. Benefits are often especially felt where the young participants find the activities to be very helpful at the time.

Destination surveys help students understand the labour market outcomes for specific programmes of study.

Taking part in career guidance activities has been linked with more positive attitudes towards school.

An easy way to enrich career guidance in schools is to invite employee volunteers to talk about the jobs they do.

Only four in ten adults have accessed career guidance in the previous five years, according to recent research. Those who do are mostly highly educated, young adults in jobs that face no particular risk in the labour market.

Many people are unaware of the availability of career guidance services aimed at adults. Vulnerable workers in low-skilled jobs (which are commonly at greatest risk of automation) tend to be least likely to access services.

One of the most effective components of career guidance is the development of a personalised career development plan,

which strongly increases the likelihood that adults will achieve employment, education and training outcomes.

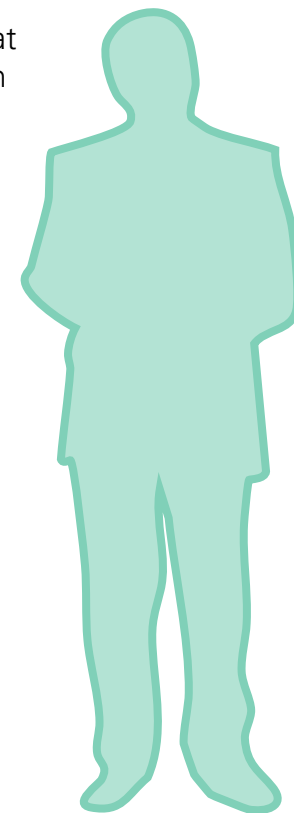
Career guidance relies on high quality information to raise the awareness of adults about the skills that are in demand and to enable career guidance practitioners to offer up-to-the-minute advice about the labour market. Adults benefit from information on flexible career pathways that enable transitions from one occupation to another while focusing training on their skill gaps.

Many governments provide economic incentives to education, training, and employment services and institutions to ensure public access to career guidance.

There are many possibilities to improve geographical and social access to career guidance through IT.

Quality assurance in career guidance is essential to ensure professionalism and impacts of services and in ensuring the career relevance of work placement programmes to support labour market transitions. It ranges from scattered and emerging measures to well-integrated systems that encompass competence standards for practitioners and regular monitoring and evaluation. Regional bodies and professional associations often provide reference tools and guidelines that can underpin national standards and frameworks.

Funding schemes for individual training, such as grants, vouchers and individual training accounts may not provide universal access to guidance services, but career guidance is often required or offered.



RESOURCES

Alongside its ongoing thematic research into lifelong guidance, Cedefop set up [CareersNet](#) in 2017 to monitor policy and system developments and innovative practices in the EU, EFTA/EEA, and EU candidate countries. It has a selection process to bring in national career development experts. The network enables career guidance peer exchanges and knowledge production on topics such as quality assurance (including monitoring and evaluation), coordination, access, career management skills, social inclusion, ICT and labour market information, tool production and strategies. The network has developed an online EU+ inventory on lifelong guidance systems and policies, and methodology for monitoring progress towards achieving the objectives laid down by the Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (2008) and the European Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance (ELGPN, 2015). The network has supported development of a new Lifelong guidance framework and policy guidelines.

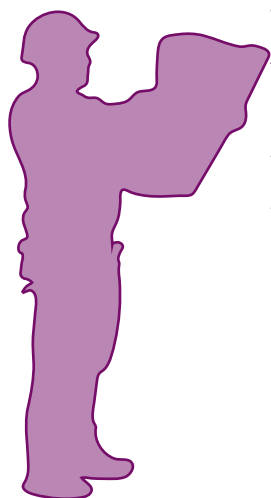
Cedefop's website provides an inventory of [lifelong guidance systems and practices](#), as well as relevant publications and online resources for EU, EFTA, EEA and EU candidate countries to improve national capacity, including through innovative practices. The labour market information toolkit and a set of training modules for practitioners and managers (including an online decision-making tool to assist national stakeholders in transferring and adapting successful innovative practice) is still online and an update is in the pipeline.

The European Commission coordinates the [Euroguidance Network](#), which provides national resource and information centres in 34 European countries. The Euroguidance Network collects, disseminates, and exchanges information on national approaches to career guidance, sharing project results, innovative working methods and best practices in lifelong guidance. Its main target group is guidance practitioners in education and employment who provide information and guidance on studying abroad to people seeking advice. It also helps the guidance community develop its skills and promotes national and international guidance practitioner networking by organising seminars, training, and study visits on various topics.

The [European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network](#) was an EU Member State-led network from 2007 to 2015, backed by the European Commission. It encouraged Member State cooperation on the priorities identified in the EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004; 2008) and supported Member States in their national lifelong guidance work, policies, strategies and services. Its website hosts a wide range of publications, including tools for developing lifelong guidance policy and systems, such as EU Guidelines, quality assurance and evidence collection frameworks, glossaries and career management skills concept notes, which remain relevant for policy, systems, and practice development.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) supports EU neighbourhood and Central Asian countries in developing [career guidance systems](#). The ETF provides policy advice on career guidance and education, supports the development of career guidance standards, regularly monitors the labour market and employment situation in partner countries and supports them in skills intelligence gathering and analysis to build human capital development. ETF further supports reforms of (vocational) education and training systems to respond to labour market and societal needs. Career guidance system reviews and career guidance factsheets, which include examples of good practice, are provided as an evidence-base for system development and for peer learning amongst partner countries.





The [International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy \(ICCDPP\)](#) was established in 2004 with the support of the OECD, the World Bank, the European Commission, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, and national governments to encourage countries to share career guidance policy and learn from international examples. Its website is a collection of career guidance policy and systems development documents and reports from international organisations and countries. The ICCDPP holds International Symposia on Career Development and Public Policy on a biennial basis, bringing together policymakers, researchers and practitioners. Thematic and country papers, proceedings, and outcomes of the international symposia are viewable on the

website. The ICCDPP publishes free monthly emails on career guidance policy and systems developments.

The [International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance \(IAEVG\)](#) was established in 1951. The organisation aims to provide global leadership in, and advocacy for, career guidance by promoting ethical and socially-just best practices throughout the world so that educational and vocational guidance and counselling from competent and qualified practitioners is available to all. The IAEVG has an annual international conference and publishes the International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance. It has members in more than 40 countries across all continents.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) supports its member states to develop comprehensive and coordinated [policies and programmes for career guidance](#), as mandated by the Employment Service Convention (C 88), the Human Resources Development Convention (C 142), the Human Resources Development Recommendation (R 195) and the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation (R208). As the only tripartite organisation in the United Nations, the ILO, jointly with governments, workers and employers' representatives, helps build integrated lifelong career development support systems for learners, workers and vulnerable groups. Career guidance is also key to achieving ILO's core mission and objectives as set out in its Centenary Declaration, namely: individual self-fulfilment, training responding to labour market needs, enhancing workers'

capacity to make choices and seize opportunities, supporting transitions, achieving gender equality and enabling entrepreneurship.

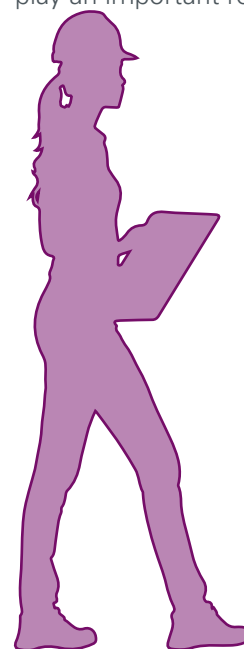
The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) researches both youth and adult career guidance, publishing advice for policymakers and practitioners. [Recent OECD work](#) includes identifying teenage indicators of better adult employment outcomes and data-driven tools to enhance practice in secondary schools. It has also developed advice on green guidance and guidance to address social inequalities, as well as launching the OECD Observatory on Digital technologies in Career guidance for Youth. PISA data on teenage career development from 80 countries is available on the OECD Teenage Career Readiness Dashboard.

With regard to adults, the OECD is exploring policies to lower barriers to career guidance and improve the quality of services, including through an international survey of guidance attitudes and use and in developing skills-profiling tools. The OECD draws on international practice and data to highlight the characteristics of more effective national delivery.

www.oecd.org/education/career-readiness and <http://www.oecd.org/employment/skills-and-work/adult-learning>

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasises that careers information and guidance services play an important role in ensuring the quality and relevance of [technical and vocational education and training \(TVET\) systems](#)

in its Recommendation concerning TVET (2015) and the UNESCO Strategy for TVET (2016-2021). Work to support career guidance is carried out by various projects such as Better Education for Africa's Rise (BEAR) that helps develop the national capacity of selected countries in Africa to improve the relevance, quality and perception of TVET systems. UNESCO develops national career guidance policy frameworks, capacity-building of career counsellors/advisers and monitoring and evaluation plans to assess the impact of the career guidance and counselling systems through this project.



KEY SOURCES FOR FURTHER READING



EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

- ✓ [European Commission \(2020\), Lifelong guidance policy and practice in the EU. Trends, challenges and opportunities: final report](#)

The study looks into what makes national guidance systems effective, key guidance trends and initiatives from around Europe, such as digital innovation and job matching tools, new and inspiring venues for guidance in urban centres or spaces, as well as new ways for stakeholders and guidance professionals to interact.

European Training Foundation – ETF:

- ✓ [ETF \(2022\), A review of national career development support systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine](#)

The report summarises key insights from national career guidance system reviews in these countries

- ✓ [ETF \(2022\), A review of national career development support systems in the Western Balkans](#)

The report summarises key insights from national career guidance system reviews in these countries.

- ✓ [ETF/UNICEF \(2024\), Learning for careers. What kinds of career guidance and career education services do young people want in Europe and Central Asia?](#)

The study explores young people's needs, feelings, and experiences of career guidance to inform policymaking.

- ✓ [ETF \(2024\), Excellence in career guidance in VET – a model](#)

- ✓ [ETF \(2024\), Gender dimension of labour market transitions: Implications for activation and skills development policies of the EU neighbouring countries](#)

The study focuses on the gender dimension of labour market transitions and its implications for policymaking on the active labour market, career guidance, and skills development.

- ✓ [ETF \(2025\), Outreach to young people not in employment, education or training - A practical manual for outreach](#)

Part I provides guidance to policy makers on how to design effective outreach programmes and the concepts and theories to guide the work of professionals. Part II outlines practical tools for those reaching out, including a Career Management Skills (CMS) framework for young NEETs.

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – CEDEFOP:

- ✓ [Cedefop, et al. \(forthcoming\), An EU reference framework and guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance](#)

- ✓ [Cedefop \(2020-2025\), Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices](#)

The inventory has been updated periodically since 2020 and provides information about policy developments and structures pertaining to career guidance, career education and career development in the EU, EEA, EFTA and EU neighbourhood countries.

- ✓ [Cedefop \(2024\), Briefing note – Monitoring and evaluating lifelong guidance systems across Europe](#)

- ✓ [Cedefop \(2023\), Lifelong guidance for persons with disabilities](#)

- ✓ [Cedefop \(2023\), Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services \(Vol. II\)](#)

This report opens discussion on the topic of indicators and outcomes in career guidance, focusing on finding common ground in monitoring and evaluation across Europe.

- ✓ [Cedefop \(2022\), Towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services \(Vol. I\)](#)

This publication provides insights into the feasible methodologies available for monitoring and evaluating career guidance and career development services.

- ✓ [Cedefop \(2021\), A fresh look at guidance practitioner professionalism](#)

This report opens discussion on the topic of indicators and outcomes in career guidance, focusing on finding common ground in monitoring and evaluation across Europe.

- ✓ [Cedefop et al. \(2021\), Digital transitions in lifelong guidance Rethinking careers practitioner professionalism: a CareersNet expert collection](#)

European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network – ELGPN:

- ✓ [ELGPN \(2015\), Tools No. 2: Glossary](#)

This publication provides a common set of definitions for lifelong guidance (LLG) policy development and related guidance terminology.

- ✓ [ELGPN \(2015\), Tools No 4: Designing and Implementing Policies Related to Career Management Skills \(CMS\)](#)

This publication is aimed at policymakers who wish to develop comprehensive national guidance with the focus on CMS acquisition.



✓ [ELGPN \(2015 \), Tools No 5: Strengthening the Quality Assurance and Evidence-Base for Lifelong Guidance](#)

This publication provides a framework to stimulate discussion between stakeholders on continuous improvement of lifelong guidance policies and practices, focusing on strengthening quality assurance and evidence-based policy. Its key quality elements are Practitioner competence, Citizen/User involvement, Service provision and improvement, Cost benefits to governments, and Cost benefits to individuals.

✓ [ELGPN \(2015 \), Tools No 6: Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance](#)

These guidelines provide advice and reference points for lifelong guidance policies and systems across the education, training, employment and social fields in order to improve the career learning experience of citizens and strengthen the professionalism of career services and tools. The Guidelines demonstrate how coherent

guidance policies and systems contribute to achieving education, employment, youth and social policy goals and can be used by policymakers and developers, sector and employee representatives, charities and associations, career guidance services and professional leaders, guidance practitioners, and trainers of guidance practitioners.

International Labour Organisation – ILO:

✓ [ILO \(2024\), Handbook for Career Development](#)

This handbook introduces a career development framework that can be adapted to build career education and career guidance programmes. It can be used to enhance, integrate and develop curricular and non-curricular activities and help in setting up and running online services. It is a guide for teachers, public employment service workers, policymakers, programme developers and careers professionals. This handbook is especially valuable for developing youth-oriented programmes.

✓ [ILO \(2024\), A guide to work experience](#)

This manual provides practical guidance to education and training institutions on how to set up in cooperation with employers and trade union representatives, short work experience periods for their students. It draws on the career development framework in the ILO's Handbook for Career Development and is an adaptable and ethical methodology well-suited to learning.

✓ [ILO \(2023\), How to support a job seeker? Handbook for Employment and Career Development Counselors](#)

This handbook provides key advice to help individuals to become employment counsellors. It includes a conceptual framework, methodology and considerations about environment that can be adapted to a country's needs.

✓ [ILO, ETF \(2022\), Developing national career development support systems](#)

This joint report by the ILO and the European Training Foundation (ETF) discusses how to develop career development support systems. Using previous research and policy work as a jumping off point, this publication summarises the lessons learnt and sets out a methodology for national reviews encompassing career guidance, career education and career development support to workers.

✓ [ILO \(2022\), A Review of National Career Development Systems](#)

This report summarises the results of reviews of four countries' national career development support systems: Armenia, Moldova, Panama, and Vietnam. The analysis gives examples of good practice and policies, challenges and recommendations for further action.

✓ [ILO \(2022\), Policy guidance note: Digitalizing career guidance services](#)

This policy guidance note provides advice to decision makers, managers and technical staff on how to invest in digitising career guidance services. Aspects it considers include system level concerns, targeting specific groups, labour market information usage, personal data, access to services and the use of AI and blockchain.

✓ [ILO \(2022\), How to work in the green economy? Guide for young people, job seekers and those who support them](#)

This guide provides young people, job seekers and those who support them with useful information to help them map out their professional goals, either as an employee of the green economy, or by becoming a sustainable entrepreneur.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD:

✓ [Chang, Y. and A. Mann \(2024\), Enhancing green career guidance systems for sustainable futures](#)

This report explores how guidance systems can help students to understand and progress towards green jobs, drawing on examples of practice in 20 countries.

✓ [Mann, A. et al. \(2025\), The State of Global Teenage Career Preparation](#)

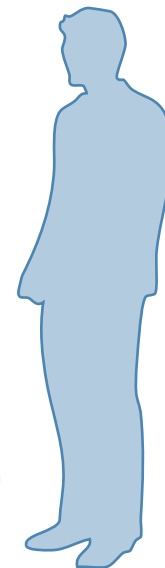
This provides an overview of international data

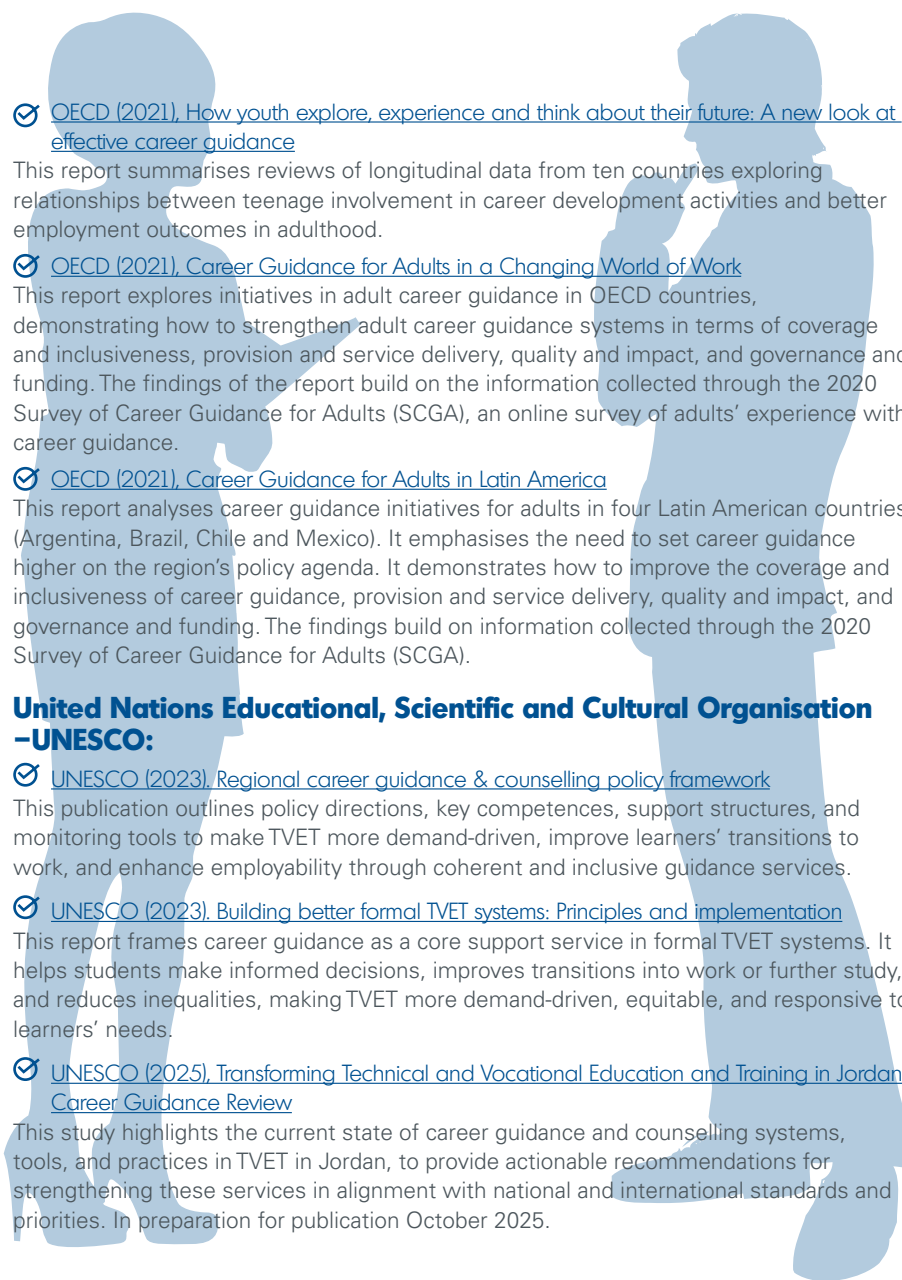
✓ [OECD \(2024\), Challenging Social Inequality Through Career Guidance: Insights from International Data and Practice](#)

This report explores how guidance systems can respond to inequalities linked to social background, gender and migrant status.

✓ [OECD \(2024\), Digital technologies in career guidance for youth: Opportunities and challenges](#)

This handbook explores the capacity of digital technologies to make guidance more effective, efficient and fair. It draws on case studies from the OECD's Observatory on Digital technologies in Career guidance for Youth.



- 
- ✓ [OECD \(2021\), How youth explore, experience and think about their future: A new look at effective career guidance](#)

This report summarises reviews of longitudinal data from ten countries exploring relationships between teenage involvement in career development activities and better employment outcomes in adulthood.

- ✓ [OECD \(2021\), Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work](#)

This report explores initiatives in adult career guidance in OECD countries, demonstrating how to strengthen adult career guidance systems in terms of coverage and inclusiveness, provision and service delivery, quality and impact, and governance and funding. The findings of the report build on the information collected through the 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA), an online survey of adults' experience with career guidance.

- ✓ [OECD \(2021\), Career Guidance for Adults in Latin America](#)

This report analyses career guidance initiatives for adults in four Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico). It emphasises the need to set career guidance higher on the region's policy agenda. It demonstrates how to improve the coverage and inclusiveness of career guidance, provision and service delivery, quality and impact, and governance and funding. The findings build on information collected through the 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation –UNESCO:

- ✓ [UNESCO \(2023\), Regional career guidance & counselling policy framework](#)

This publication outlines policy directions, key competences, support structures, and monitoring tools to make TVET more demand-driven, improve learners' transitions to work, and enhance employability through coherent and inclusive guidance services.

- ✓ [UNESCO \(2023\), Building better formal TVET systems: Principles and implementation](#)

This report frames career guidance as a core support service in formal TVET systems. It helps students make informed decisions, improves transitions into work or further study, and reduces inequalities, making TVET more demand-driven, equitable, and responsive to learners' needs.

- ✓ [UNESCO \(2025\), Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Jordan. Career Guidance Review](#)

This study highlights the current state of career guidance and counselling systems, tools, and practices in TVET in Jordan, to provide actionable recommendations for strengthening these services in alignment with national and international standards and priorities. In preparation for publication October 2025.

- ✓ [UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning \(2022\), Making lifelong learning a reality: A handbook](#)

This handbook frames career guidance as a pillar of lifelong learning systems, necessary for navigating pathways, promoting equity, integrating education and labour markets, and fostering adaptability in the face of rapid change.

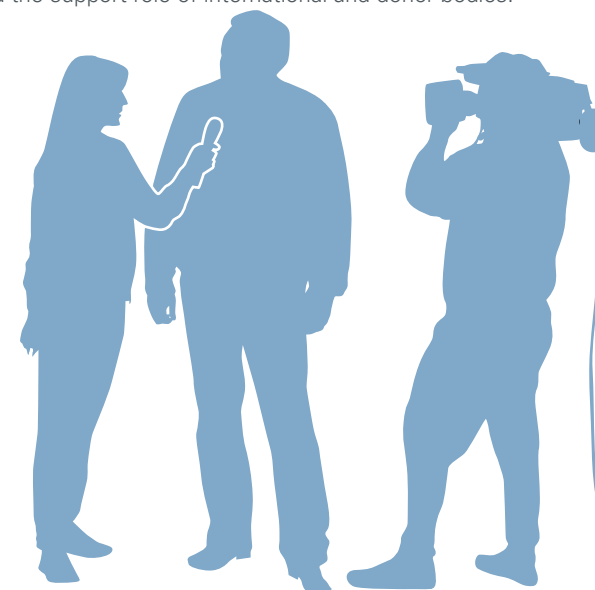
- ✓ [Watts, A. G. \(2013\), Career guidance and orientation](#)

In: UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Ed.), Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice (pp. 239–273). UNESCO-UNEVOC. This publication examines how career guidance supports demand-driven, lifelong TVET systems, highlighting practices, policy rationales, technology's role, and UNESCO's contribution.

Inter-agency collaboration:

- ✓ [Cedefop; European Commission; ETF; ICCDPP; ILO; OECD; UNESCO \(2020\), Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic: results of a joint international survey – June to August 2020](#)

This report is based on a flash jointly conducted international survey designed to provide a snapshot of how career guidance policies, systems and services were adapting and coping since the declaration of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. The survey explored these policies, systems and practices (focusing on remote and ICT-based delivery) in the early phase of government reactions to the pandemic, the extent to which the pandemic and its social consequences triggered a debate on career guidance reform, and the role for career guidance in pandemic recovery measures. It also considered the support role of international and donor bodies.



The **Inter-Agency Working Group on Career Guidance** (WGCG) was set up in 2021 with the aim of (i) exchanging plans and ideas; (ii) coordinating activities and messages; and (iii) developing and implementing joint activities and products. Members of the WGCG engaged in updating this document are the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Commission, the European Training Foundation (ETF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank. The WGCG is a subgroup of the Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

This booklet was produced by members of the group with the kind support of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) and the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP).

