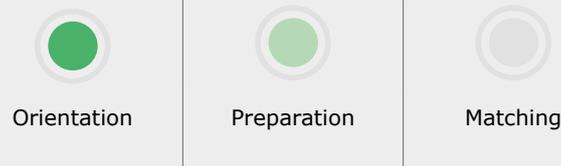


**YouMatch**Global Initiative on Innovative  
Employment Services for Youth

## Employment Service Career Guidance



The understanding of career guidance underwent a post-millennium paradigm shift brought about by the work of the OECD, the EU Commission (ETF, CEDEFOP), the World Bank and the ILO, and resulted in a new internationally shared definition:

*"Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counseling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services."* (OECD, 2004)

This definition differs from traditional approaches. Career guidance approaches are shifting

- from intervention at key points in life to a lifelong perspective,
- from 'choosing a career' to 'constructing a career',
- from psychological 'testing' to pedagogical 'tasting the world of work',
- from external expert support to career(self)-management skills, and
- from individual guidance to group-and self-help approaches.<sup>1</sup>

Career Guidance is distinct from other services which

- place individuals into vacancies against the requirements and selection criteria of a specific job or employer (placement, recruitment);
- attract workers into specific jobs, companies, business sectors or fields of work (promotion, image campaigning);
- introduce job entrants to a new working environment, giving instructions and orientation (induction);
- help individuals deal with crisis situations or problems (psychosocial counselling, therapy).

Within the EU, CG policy and practice support the lifelong learning policy for knowledge-based economies<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Helmut Zelloth, ETF: [http://www.etf.europa.eu/eventsmgmt.nsf/\(getAttachment\)/2487E6783FDC224BC1257CD6005614CA/\\$File/Helmut%20Zelloth\\_The%20role%20of%20Lifelong%20Guidance.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/eventsmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/2487E6783FDC224BC1257CD6005614CA/$File/Helmut%20Zelloth_The%20role%20of%20Lifelong%20Guidance.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See the EU Council Resolutions 2004 and 2008 on Lifelong Guidance.



**Providers**

Career education, guidance, and counselling are offered by a variety of institutions such as education, training, higher education, public employment services, community centres, NGOs, youth centres, businesses (for profit), and employers.

Ideally, such services are coordinated within and across institutions on both the local level (e.g. by a municipality) and on the national level (coordination or cooperation of related ministries).



**Target Groups**

Students in basic education, secondary education (including TVET) and in higher education.

Young people at risk who have dropped out of formal education and training with few or no qualifications.

Adults re-entering the job-market or in need of or with a desire to change their current position or work environment.



**Objectives**

Career guidance is a “public and private good” impacting positively on both the personal development of the individual and on society:

By assisting people to make meaningful decisions on education, learning and working opportunities and promoting active citizenship, career guidance improves work satisfaction and productivity as well as personal and occupational fulfilment.

In education and training, career guidance helps direct students to relevant and career orientated programmes increasing efficiency and quality of education and training, contributing to reducing skill shortages and drop-out rates.

In the labour market, career guidance supports a better match of supply and demand (on target group level), prepares for employment and selfemployment, may contribute to improve the social prestige of blue collar work, raise the adaptability of the workforce and encourage lifelong learning and career development.

Career guidance also contributes to social cohesion and equity (social integration, gender, citizenship).



**Range of Concepts**

Career guidance involves a broad range of services and activities. It does not necessarily start with or even include testing. Other elements are also typically part of career guidance processes: processing information (on labour market, occupations, education and training opportunities), learning explorations skills (company visits, interviews with professionals and workers, job shadowing), self-awareness exercises to help individuals uncover their values, attitudes, skills, talents, and interests), re-/gaining the joy of learning, communication (listening skills, giving and receiving feedback, dealing with conflicts, etc.), reflecting work experiences (jobs, 5 internships), how to utilizes existing services, counselling, coaching, mentoring, elaborating portfolios or CVs, to name a few.

Career guidance services are relevant to all members of society and at various points in time. Due to limited public resources, service sometimes focus on critical points of transition (e.g. career education to foster smooth school to work-transition) or on supporting disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.



Resources

**Human resources:**

In some countries there are career guidance specialists (and related pre- or in-service training programmes) to be found in the education or public employment service sectors, in specialised civil society organisations, and in the private sector (human resource professionals). Other semi-professionals (e.g. teachers, social workers) have an important role to play because of their detailed knowledge of the target group and immediate transition routes or because of their affinity to vulnerable groups.

**Programmes & materials:**

Career guidance cannot be 'explained' but must be 'experienced'. It is very different from regular school subjects and requires different contents, materials, and delivery methods. Programmes and materials need to be tailored to the needs of the target groups as well as to be embedded in the mandate and working conditions of the respective provider.

**Coordination & collaboration:**

Career guidance supports transitions from school to work, from one job to another, from employment to self-employment (and vice versa), from unemployment to learning or working, etc. Coordination and cooperation of sending (like, for example, basic education) and hosting/ receiving institutions (for example upper secondary schools) create bridges to ease transition from one educational institution to the other. TVET institutions and universities, likewise cooperate with companies to ease the transition of graduates into the labour market. Institutions need external cooperation partners relevant to their target groups to facilitate transitions. Not only on the inter-institutional level, but also on the policy level (local and national) coordination is useful to provide services in sufficient capacities, sequence and time to meet the needs of the target groups.

**Time & Timing:**

Career guidance needs time resources and good timing. If clients need comprehensive services (including self- and opportunity awareness) rather than mere information, the orientation- and decisionmaking process may well take several weeks or months. The optimal time for career guidance is, when people already feel changes coming up and know that decisions are due to be taken, but do not feel under urgent pressure yet. For example, secondary school students may commence initial career guidance activities in the penultimate year of their education. Examination periods should be avoided.

**Client-centeredness:**

Career guidance and counselling services assist the individual. Despite the benefits of career guidance to companies and the fact that companies contribute for their own business interests, relevant and successful career guidance must focus on the individual client in an impartial and nonjudgemental way to help them achieve their goals.



Success Factors



### Success Factors

#### **Long-term process:**

Like learning, career development is a lifelong process and ideally, is provided to citizens of all ages whenever they need it. As public funds are limited, 'lifelong guidance' might be more of a vision than a reality for most countries. Using existing infrastructure (schools, public employment) and starting early in education is an investment in the career (self-)management skills of young people that can reduce the need for career guidance in later stages and help prevent long and costly education processes with little return on investment in terms of employment prospects. Lifelong guidance is not a single intervention, but a series of many, which work most effectively when interfaced.

#### **Self-understanding as element of career guidance:**

Assisting individuals to search for work (and learning) opportunities where they utilize their strengths, and which have some meaning to them beyond the necessity of earning a living is not a luxury but a necessity for the productivity and the engagement of workers. Good career guidance, therefore, helps clients become aware of their values, skills, talents, interests, attitudes and assists them find environments where they can use (some of) these qualities.

#### **The relevance of information:**

Career decisions should be informed, i.e. based on information (as opposed to beliefs, stereotypes, social prejudices or the opinion of peers, parents, teachers, preachers, or the media). Apart from providing reliable and up to date-information where available, career guidance can teach clients how to interpret this information and how to distinguish fact from opinion. Career guidance should encourage clients to develop and use exploration, interviewing, and networking skills to gather first-hand information in the company, at the workplace or education or training provider. This is necessary where young people start their career development in the informal sector, because this occupational information is often not available or too general to be useful. Some consider informational interviewing a 'life skill' because it can be learned and is useful on a lifelong basis and not only for employment purposes.

#### **Tests:**

(e.g. psychometric, interest or ability tests; potential analysis) can be useful and are popular. However, they must be applied carefully and by trained staff and not as a sole stand-alone tool only as they can also be misleading. Clients should never base their career decisions on testing results only. Career guidance practitioners should always discuss test results with clients.

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