

# Good Adult Career Guidance

## International case study evidence Annex

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report should be read alongside the summary report ‘Good Adult Career Guidance’. It presents the **findings of a project designed to understand what good career guidance for adults looks like internationally**. The scope of the project explored adults out of work who wanted to work, and adults who were working but faced issues, and therefore wanted support to move to different employment. Together these two groups constitute 11.1 million people in England (Percy, 2022).
- 1.2** This report presents detailed findings from research undertaken in 2023 with individuals involved in adult career guidance in seven countries: Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium and Denmark. In-depth case studies on the first four countries have explored the whole adult career guidance system within each country. In the latter three, desk research and interviews focused on a specific aspect of the adult career guidance system.
- 1.3** Case studies were informed by a rapid evidence review of the literature followed by a long- and short-listing process to identify where practice was good and where lessons could be learned. Evidence to inform these case studies was collected through a review of literature and a series of interviews to understand good practice within these countries. Each case study presents the geographical context and evidence base and provides an overview of the country’s adult career guidance system and delivery structures.
- 1.4** Each of the four system-wide case studies involved a series of interviews with individuals with expertise and/or direct involvement with the adult career guidance systems. The number of individuals interviewed per country varied (depending on demographic, geographic factors and the size of the guidance system), but interviewees in each country comprised the following:
- Policy makers at either national or regional level to provide insights into the rationale and policy ambitions for their adult career guidance services
  - Senior delivery partners (public, private or voluntary / community organisations) to outline the reach of their service, its scale, outcomes for clients and design features
  - Career guidance practitioners to understand their backgrounds, scope of practice, client group, what works for their clients and professional challenges
  - Academics to provide context, a longitudinal perspective, and reflections on good and / or transferrable practice.
- 1.5** In total we spoke to 57 people; nine in Estonia, nine in Finland, seventeen in Germany and nineteen in the Netherlands. Research questions explored topics summarised in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1: Case study research questions**

Primary Question	Abbreviated question topics
Policy oversight	What legislation is in place? Which ministries own or oversee it? What are the priorities? Who makes policy? Is it national or regional?
Resourcing	How is adult career guidance provision resourced?
Delivery partners	What is the role of the Public Employment Service? Which other organisations deliver services for adults?
Participants	Who can access publicly funded guidance for adults? Are services tailored to diverse groups? Do people self-fund?
Performance management	How are services monitored and performance managed? How are they evaluated?
Accessibility	How do people know what is available? How do they access them? Are they in person or digital?
Differentiation	Do different types of service user have access to different types of adult career guidance? Are these delivered by the same provider?
Labour market information	How is LMI collected and shared? How is it used by individuals, practitioners and policy makers?
Quality assurance	How is adult guidance provision quality assured?
Career guidance workforce	Is adult career guidance recognised as a profession? Are practitioners qualified? Do they access training? Who provides training?

**1.6** In addition to the four system-wide case studies, there were three countries in which one aspect of their adult career guidance system was thought to offer transferrable learning. These were: Australia's 'Jobs Victoria' pilot programme; the use of career vouchers in Flanders, Belgium, and the role of Trade Unions in Denmark. Each of these case studies involved one interview.

## 2. Estonia

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### Geographical Context

**Figure 2-1: Estonia**



**2.1** Estonia is a Northern European country, bordering Russia to the East and Latvia to the South. Finland lies just 60km north across the Gulf of Finland at its closest point. Estonia has an area of 45,339 sq km, approximately twice the size of Wales.

**2.2** In 2023, Estonia had a population of 1.4 million (Statistics Estonia), similar to the number of people living in the Sheffield City Region (ONS). The population is concentrated in two main cities – Tallinn (with a population of 450,000 – 33% of the total) and

Tartu (100,000 – 7%). Of the population, 63.3% are working age, similar to the 64.0% in the UK but below the OECD average of 64.8%<sup>1</sup>. In 2022 76% of people of working age were in employment<sup>2</sup>, 11.4% of those aged 15-29 in Estonia were not in employment, education or training (NEET), compared with 10.6% in the UK<sup>3</sup> Wages are relatively low compared to the UK<sup>4</sup>. It is acknowledged as having successfully developed one of the most advanced digital societies<sup>5</sup>.

**2.3** The official language of Estonia is Estonian, and is the native language of two-thirds of those living in Estonia (Statistics Estonia), Just under half (48%) also speak English and slightly less (39%) speak Russian. Estonia has a high proportion of migrants, with approximately 10% of the population not an Estonian Citizen; the majority of these (60%) are Russian.

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2024), Working age population (indicator). doi: 10.1787/d339918b-en

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2024), Employment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/1de68a9b-en

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2024), Youth NEET (indicator). doi: 10.1787/72d1033a-en

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2024), Average wages (indicator). doi: 10.1787/cc3e1387-en

<sup>5</sup> OECD (2020) *Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems: Lessons from Six OECD Countries*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3a4bb6ea-en>.



- 2.4** Educationally, Estonia has a North-South divide, with 52.6% of the population in Northern Estonia (including Tallinn) possessing a certificate of Education beyond secondary, compared with 37.5% in Southern Estonia (Statistics Estonia). Nationally though the spend on education at both early and tertiary levels is close to the OECD average<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.5** Estonia is a small country with a distinctive national character. It provides a useful case study of carer guidance because it has restructured its system recently (with restructuring from 2019 and new strategies for education and wellbeing having been recently adopted). Also, it has a system that is being extended from a service set up to provide support to unemployed people to one being developed to support all adults.

### Sources of evidence

- 2.6** This case study has been informed by the key reports (in English), and websites listed below as well as consultations with nine people from: the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Eesti Töötukassa (the PES), Tallinn University, a Gymnasium (High School Grades 1-12) careers counsellor, a self employed career counsellor, and a career counsellor at a vocational college.

#### Key reports

Euroguidance (2023). Lifelong Guidance in Estonia. Accessible at:

<https://www.euroguidance.eu/new-publication-lifelong-guidance-in-estonia>

Cedefop (2020). Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices – Estonia. Accessible at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-estonia>

Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia (2021). Education Strategy 2021-2035. Accessible at: <https://www.hm.ee/en/ministry/ministry/strategic-planning-2021-2035#documents>

Ministry of Social Affairs (2023) Well-being development plan. [Accessible at: https://www.sm.ee/heaolu-arengukava-2023-2030#heaolu-arengukava-20](https://www.sm.ee/heaolu-arengukava-2023-2030#heaolu-arengukava-20) and in English at <https://www.social-protection.org>

### Organisation of the adult career guidance system

#### Policies, drivers and rationales

- 2.7** Adult career guidance in Estonia is covered by two strategic objectives. The first is a commitment to lifelong learning that recognises that the skills needs of the country will change with technology and the changing demands of the economy. The second is an ambition to ensure high employment and quality working conditions alongside a commitment to

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2024), Education spending (indicator). doi: 10.1787/ca274bac-en

supporting people through periods of unemployment with grants and labour market services and benefits<sup>7</sup>.

- 2.8** The authorities responsible for the development of lifelong guidance in the public sector are the Ministry of Education and Research (which has prime responsibility for delivery) and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Education and Research's Education Strategy 2021-2035<sup>8</sup> sets out educational goals associated with lifelong guidance to ensure that; *'Learning options are responsive to the development needs of society and the labour market'*. This recognises the education and training needs of people who are already in the workforce, (including continuing training and retraining opportunities) as well as those entering it for the first time.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.9** The Ministry of Social Affairs oversees a Well-being Development Plan 2023-2030 which includes a stated sub-goal to *'[Match] labour supply and demand [to ensure] a high level of employment and high-quality working conditions that support long-term labour market participation'* (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2023).
- 2.10** The Public Employment Service was a part of the Ministry of Social Affairs but has recently moved to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. The legal underpinning of adult careers guidance, as delivered by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance fund<sup>9</sup> (or Public Employment Service (PES)), is defined by two laws: the 'Unemployment Insurance Act' which details conditions around unemployment (including unemployment insurance and the structure of the PES; and (until the end of 2023) the 'Labour Market Services and Benefits Act'<sup>10</sup> which details the provision of labour market services like career guidance and is renewed every 2-3 years.

### Funding

- 2.11** Funding for Eesti Töötukassa (the PES) is provided through a combination of unemployment insurance contributions (paid for by employers and employees) and the European Social Fund. The budget for the PES has been recalculated every year by estimating the demand for (and therefore cost of) counselling, partly by forecasting trends in unemployment and student numbers.
- 2.12** After the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 the 'Labour Market Services and Benefits Act' will be replaced with the 'Labour Market Measures Act'<sup>11</sup>. This draws together provisions outlined in approximately ten separate acts into one, and will give a mandate to the PES to offer services

<sup>7</sup> Riigi Teataja (2023) [Unemployment Insurance Act](#)

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia (2021). Education Strategy 2021-2035. Accessible at: <https://www.hm.ee/en/ministry/ministry/strategic-planning-2021-2035#documents>

<sup>9</sup> Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund website: [Eesti Töötukassa](#)

<sup>10</sup> Riigi Teataja (2023) Labour Market Services and Benefits Act 2005-2023  
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/506072023005/consolide>

<sup>11</sup> Riigi Teataja (2023) Labour Market Measures Act 2024

<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/515112023002/consolide>

until 2029, offering certainty and financial stability. This change was made to make the legislation clearer, so it is easier to see which people are entitled to which services. The focus of the act is to help adults enter or return to the employment market by ensuring they have the right skills.

### Labour market information

- 2.13** Labour market information used within the PES is provided by career information specialists and is derived from two sources. OSKA<sup>12</sup> (provided by the Estonian Qualifications Authority) and an internal 'labour demand barometer'. OSKA forecasts long term labour market trends using data from employment registers, population and sector surveys and expert interrogation. It is used strategically, for example to plan subsidised training to manage the skills supply; and operationally to provide insights for career counselling.
- 2.14** In addition, data is provided by Statistics Estonia, the national statistical body. This includes websites where average salaries for different roles can be compared across Estonia as well as future salary predictions and forecasts of which careers are likely to be replaced by AI in the future<sup>13</sup>. Some additional data is available through dashboards provided by the Bureau of Labour Statistics<sup>14</sup>.
- 2.15** For more short-term views of demand and supply Eesti Töötukassa have developed a 'Labour demand barometer'<sup>15</sup>. This estimates demand for particular roles for each region and is generated by assessing skills supply with indicators of employers' demand over the next 12 months. Generated with collaboration from employers it provides interactive mapping for counsellors and individuals to explore change by occupation and region.
- 2.16** Information about learning opportunities is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research whose education information system is a sophisticated digital encompassing database that links information about individuals with labour market data<sup>16</sup>. This is linked to the Qualifications Authority's register of occupational qualifications<sup>17</sup>.
- 2.17** The role of general education, vocational education and higher education institutions is to ensure access to lifelong guidance for their students. The Education and Youth Board supports educational institutions in the implementation of national curricula. As a result of the curriculum development process concerning entrepreneurship and career management skills, Estonia is heading towards the better integration of career management and entrepreneurial skills within the curriculum application process over the forthcoming years.

<sup>12</sup> Estonian Qualifications Authority [OSKA - OSKA studies](#)

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Estonia Palgad website. <https://palgad.stat.ee/en>

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Estonia website: <https://www.stat.ee/en/find-statistics/statistics-theme/work-life/labour-market>

<sup>15</sup> Eesti Töötukassa [Labour demand barometer](#)

<sup>16</sup> OECD (2020), *Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems: Lessons from Six OECD Countries*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3a4bb6ea-en>.

<sup>17</sup> see <https://www.kutseregister.ee/en/avalett/>



Furthermore, as the national Euroguidance centre, the Board also provides support in the areas of international learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training and employment to Estonian guidance professionals and professionals abroad<sup>18</sup>.

### Cooperation and coordination structures

**2.18** The development and availability of careers services (either through educational providers or the PES) in Estonia is monitored and discussed as part of the National Careers Guidance Forum. This group is established by the PES, it meets three to four times a year and its role is to monitor provision and discuss development areas<sup>19</sup>. Membership includes: The Ministry of Education and Research, the Association of Estonian Careers Counsellors, the Education and Youth Board, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, student representative organisations, school heads representatives, and the qualifications authority.

### Delivery structures in Estonia

#### Public Employment Service (Eesti Töötukassa)

**2.19** The main organisation delivering provision and development of guidance in Estonia is the Public Employment Service (PES) (Eesti Töötukassa), also known as the unemployment insurance fund. In addition to paying labour market benefits, and providing career information, the PES is responsible for career guidance services to all people regardless of their employment. This includes:

- provision of personal career guidance, either at the employment office or in the workplace
- delivery of unemployment prevention measures including a degree study allowance, subsidised training and in-work support for people to obtain relevant qualifications<sup>20</sup> noting that access to such support is mediated by a PES career counsellor.

**2.20** In the last five years the PES has moved from marketing itself primarily to unemployed individuals to instead focus on the entire working population -any age or labour market status. The marketing is generally focussed on explaining what to expect from career counselling and why it might benefit them.

**2.21** Career counselling provided by the PES is subdivided into 'Work-centred counselling' which is a mandatory requirement for those that are unemployed, and career counselling which is voluntary and of a more open-ended nature. Services are offered from 15 main regional offices by approximately 80 careers counsellors and 40 career information specialists. Counselling is offered in either Estonian or Russian language and all information is available

<sup>18</sup> See <https://eeagentuur.ee/materjalid/lifelong-guidance-in-estonia/> , page 6

<sup>19</sup> The Education and Youth Board of Estonia (2023) Lifelong Guidance in Estonia.

<sup>20</sup> The Education and Youth Board of Estonia (2023) Lifelong Guidance in Estonia. P11

in either language. In some of the smaller offices there may be only 3 or 4 careers counsellors available to support the region and consequently there is limited scope to offer specialist provision across the whole service.

**2.22** Career counsellors are all qualified to at least Level 6 and often Level 7, and mostly have a background in social science, psychology, teaching or human resources. Staff in the PES are well-paid, and earn above the average salary in Estonia. This is no academic qualification available in career guidance, however occupational qualification standards are well established at Levels 6 and 7.. The PES builds training programmes for their team that blend general mandatory in-person training in topics such as labour market information, counselling skills, and practitioner training with on-line training modules. This was described as a professional competency model built around skills needed to do the job rather than qualifications. There is then further support available for staff to take the professional exam which is provided by the Association of Estonian Career Counsellors. These systems are significant in that they ensure the professional development of practitioners in career guidance<sup>21</sup>.

#### Other public provision

**2.23** In vocational education institutions career management skills are taught through a compulsory level 4 module; Learning path and working in a changing environment'. Guidance is available for student candidates and students at six public universities and in several universities of applied sciences including career counselling (to make career choices, search and apply for jobs). This is provided alongside other support to help the transition to student life, study and psychological issues.

#### Other provision

**2.24** There is a small but growing private adult career guidance sector used by companies and individuals that includes recruitment companies, consulting companies and freelance practitioners. There are two larger private organisations that provide career services, and a handful of smaller ones (about 10 that are specialised in career services). There are a handful of “very famous and very good” private providers that have their own clients, however, because the PES offers free services, this private sector is niche. Private sector providers are more relevant if the client has specific needs (like being a very talented young person or an adult that entirely wants to change career) or wants a service not paid for by the PES, including personal growth courses.

**2.25** Some of the largest companies employ an internal career counsellor that can provide career counselling to their staff, as part of their HR function. This is currently only offered by very

<sup>21</sup> Cedefop et al. (2021). *Digital transitions in lifelong guidance: rethinking careers practitioner professionalism: a CareersNet expert collection*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper; No 2. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/539512>

few businesses, likely as a result of an acute shortage of employees in Estonia leading businesses to go further lengths to retain staff.

## Individual engagement

### Entitlement

- 2.26** Since 2019, all Estonian adults have been able to access careers guidance for free through Eesti Töötukassa, regardless of employment status. This is also extended to Estonians living abroad. Services can be accessed both face-to-face at regional offices as well as virtually.
- 2.27** In Tallinn, one of the PES departments runs an interactive Career Centre ('Tallinna Karjäärikeskus') which provides a creative, open and self-exploratory space for career development. This includes interactive exhibits such as a job interview simulator, and virtual reality devices to introduce different jobs. The Centre uses interactive solutions and gamification to help people explore career options and build employability skills
- 2.28** A survey commissioned by Eesti Töötukassa undertaken in 2021 found that just over half of young people (18-26 years) and just under a quarter of adults (27-64 years) had engaged with career services in the previous two years<sup>22</sup> (Centar, 2021). We were told that the service is targeted to reach 2.5% of the working adult workforce in Estonia each year and it generally achieves at, or near, this target.

### Digital access

- 2.29** Estonia has a reputation for being digitally advanced in both its private and public sectors. Careers counsellors offer digital appointments and use webinars and chat facilities to engage with clients. Digital services are particularly important in rural areas where transport connectivity may be too weak for individuals to meet a counsellor in person. In recent years the PES has expanded the digital component of both:
- provision of services to clients, which includes websites providing information on careers possibilities and labour market conditions, digitally administered tools (i.e. personality tests) and, in some instances, integration of virtual reality (VR) technology
  - internal management processes, which includes the OTT system, an AI profiling tool which estimates jobseekers' likelihood of returning to the labour market soon and helps to plan and manage counsellor case-loads<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Centar (2021) Career services in Estonia: Towards a complete solution, [Summary](https://centar.ee/en/tehtud-tood/career-services-in-estonia-towards-a-complete-solution), <https://centar.ee/en/tehtud-tood/career-services-in-estonia-towards-a-complete-solution>

<sup>23</sup> Eesti Töötukassas (2021) Decision support tool "OTT" for employment counsellors in the Estonian PES. Accessible at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/PES-Digital-Oct2021-Estonia.pdf>

**2.30** While a portfolio system has been developed in which individuals can map their competencies ('My Career'), usage and awareness of this is low.

#### Access by specific groups

**2.31** Some bespoke careers services are offered for particular population groups co-ordinated by the PES and delivered by PES staff sometimes as outreach. This includes:

- 'International House' (part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications), which offers careers guidance to international newcomers provided by PES staff alongside other public services.
- The 'Education and Youth board' who oversee the development of careers education for those aged 7-26 years and those in educational institutions
- Young adults (notable NEET) who can access projects that are funded through European Social Funds or are in collaboration with the Ministry of Education
- The Estonian military, who has recently developed its own career guidance system for veterans and military personnel.

**2.32** In addition, there are specific schemes set up to provide for the needs of Ukrainian refugees, creative practitioners and, in association with the Estonian Olympic Committee, sportspeople who have retired from their sport.

**2.33** Within the PES there are not specialised career services catering for individuals with specific needs – this is partly explained by Estonia's low population necessitating that all career counsellors are generalists. Individual careers counsellors often choose to tailor their services to cater for specific groups, but this is driven by personal preference and organisational objectives and not driven by policy.

### Emerging lessons

#### Digital practice

**2.34** Estonia's digital services are well developed. It has a digital architecture that has been designed to capture information at an individual level about attainment, labour market participation and reward and therefore its labour market information is based in sound data. It also has a physical infrastructure that provides its citizens with access to internet and has high digital literacy. It uses this foundation to provide career guidance services using a range of media, and access to tools so support career exploration. Despite this, use of the online portfolio is reported to be low.

### Co-operation and coordination structures

**2.35** The Ministry of Education and Research has responsibility for the government's lifelong learning ambitions. The Ministry of Social Affairs until recently was responsible for wellbeing which included responsibility for high employment rates and high quality employment. They were also responsible for the PES which has recently moved to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. All Ministries appear to work well with **cross-governmental** forums, informed, in the case of career guidance, by a National Careers Guidance Forum. Recent legislation has further consolidated the work of the PES to provide clarity about its functions, services and funding over a five year period. This level of cross-governmental working is no doubt supported in the context of a small country with a core group of professionals and policy makers. However, the principle of aligning skills policy with employment policy and of recognising the role of career guidance to mediate the two is useful.

### Labour market activation measures

**2.36** The Estonian government also appears to **adopt a pro-active stance to labour market management** by using robust evidence to understand skills and employment trends and investing in training schemes that seek to pre-empt labour market shortages. At the same time it recognises that labour market skills are an issue for the whole workforce rather than either just new-entrants or those who are inactive. While the scale of career support for employed adults is modest (relative to those for unemployed adults) it is nevertheless enshrined in a clear statement of entitlement and there is some effort to market services to all adults.

### Tailored labour market information

**2.37** Active labour market policy needs good evidence about the past, present and future labour market and economy. The use of national government data, interpreted by experts, managed by an separate agency to generate **labour market information** appears to be an effective model. That it is also **tailored to the needs of policy makers and to career counsellors** providing individuals and career counsellors with user-friendly labour market information to help inform individual decision making is good practice.

### Qualified workforce

**2.38** There are different roles in the careers workforce, in the PES there are career counsellors and career information specialists. We were told that career counsellors are highly qualified and well paid within the PES. They undertake training within their role to build the knowledge and competences they need to do the job and those that we met were clearly highly skilled, motivated and enthusiastic about the role. There was no accredited qualification as such but professional competence is being safeguarded by the professional association. **Using professionals to adapt their practice to different groups** of adults (including migrants and



offenders), and to use different modes of delivery (face to face, telephone, webinars, groups) provided some opportunities to tailor practice to the needs of different groups.

## 3. Finland

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### Geographical Context

**Figure 3-1: Finland**



**3.1** Finland is a Scandinavian country with Sweden to the West and Russia to the East (the capital, Helsinki, is just 300km from St Petersburg). Finland has a land surface area of approximately 300,000 km<sup>2</sup> (larger than the UK with a surface area of 240,000km<sup>2</sup>), approximately a quarter of which is in the Arctic Circle (World Bank).

**3.2** In October 2023, Statistics Finland estimated the Finnish population at 5.6m people, approximately equal to the combined population of the

Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield Metropolitan areas. 36% of these live in the seven largest cities in Finland, higher than the 22% for England and Wales (ONS)<sup>24</sup>. In 2022, 61.6% of the population were of working age, less than the UK (64.0%) and OECD average (64.8%). This is explained by Finland having both a larger elderly population and a smaller younger population than the OECD averages.

**3.3** Educational attainment in Finland is high according to PISA results – even lower performing groups perform higher than the OECD average<sup>25</sup>. In Finland, 57% of 18-24 year-olds are still in full- or part-time education or training at either upper secondary or tertiary level (above the OECD average of 54%). A subset of these students (19% of 18-24 year-olds) combine their education or training with some form of employment in Finland, compared to 17% on average

<sup>24</sup> In 2020 – the latest year for which this data is available.

<sup>25</sup> OECD (2022) PISA results: Factsheets <https://www.oecd.org/publication/pisa-2022-results/country-notes/>

across the OECD<sup>26</sup>. 11.1% of the 15-29 population in Finland is NEET, a larger proportion than the UK (10.6%), but a lesser proportion than the OECD average (12.6%)<sup>27</sup>.

### Sources of evidence

- 3.4** In total we spoke to nine stakeholders in Finland covering academics, policymakers, practitioners and programme managers from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Department for Upper Secondary and Vocational Education, the Department of Vocational Education and Training at the Finnish National Agency for Education, the Finnish Institute for Education and research, the Region State Administrative Agency, SECLE (Service Centre for Continuous Learning & Employment), a trade union and a counsellor from the telephone career guidance service.
- 3.5** The interviews addressed Finland' adult career guidance system holistically, variously exploring practice in education, employment including employers and trade unions, the public employment service and the private sector.

### Key reports

Cedefop (2021). Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Finland. *CareersNet national records*. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-finland>

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<sup>26</sup> OECD (2022), Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-en>.

<sup>27</sup> OECD (2024), Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) (indicator). doi: 10.1787/72d1033a-en

Toni, A., & Vuorinen, R. (2020). Lifelong guidance in Finland: Key policies and practices. In E. Hagaseth Haug, T. Hooley, J. Kettunen, & R. Thomsen (Eds.) *Career and career guidance in the Nordic countries* (pp. 127-143). Brill.

### Geographic context

- 3.6** Finland is a European parliamentary democracy with a diversified modern industrial economy (CIA, 2023). Major industries include timber, metals, engineering, telecommunications, and electronics. It has a mixed economy with a strong welfare state and high levels of labour regulation. The country currently involved in a process of devolution of power from central government to its 19 administrative regions.

### Organisation of the adult career guidance system

- 3.7** Finland has a well-developed adult guidance system which is organised as part of a wider lifelong guidance system which includes strong provision in schools and other youth services.

### Policies, drivers and rationales

- 3.8** Finnish governments are committed to the delivery of a lifelong guidance system although inevitably the level of political support for the area has fluctuated over the last twenty years (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020). Counselling services in vocational schools ([Law 531/2017](#), para. 61) and upper secondary general education ([Law 629/1998](#), paras. 7 and 22) are prescribed by law<sup>28</sup>
- 3.9** In March 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry for Economic Affairs both endorsed the National Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2020-23<sup>29</sup>. This sets out priorities of the current government in education, youth, employment, and social policy. It aims to widen access to guidance, to strengthen lifelong career management skills and enhance skills assessment, upskilling and career development in the working life. It also includes recommendations for strategic long-term objectives for lifelong guidance practice and policy development.
- 3.10** The Public Employment Services Act is also regularly updated to address issues and objectives of the public employment service in Finland. It defines the services to be provided

<sup>28</sup> <sup>28</sup> Cedefop (2020). *Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices – Finland* CareersNet national records. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-finland>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://euroguidance.eu/finnish-national-lifelong-guidance-strategy-2020-2023-now-available-in-english>

for both individuals and organisations, the jobseeker's service process and the subsidies and compensation related to the service<sup>30</sup>.

- 3.11** Key principles for the system, set out in the strategy are that guidance provision should be: accessible and customer-orientated, digital, high quality, supportive of an equal, fair and diverse society in Finland; cross-sectoral and co-ordinated, and evidence-based.

### Funding

- 3.12** Services in Finland have been well funded by central government, and benefit from a stable funding environment. There are current concerns that shifting responsibility to local government could change this and led to less secure funding, and or less funding.

### Quality assurance

- 3.13** Finland has a number of mechanisms to measure, evidence and assess the quality and performance of career guidance. These include a satisfaction and feedback survey focused on users of public employment services, the results of which are fed back into the strategic planning and improvement to PES services. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has also developed a quality standard for all of its products and services (including career guidance services in the PES). In addition some regions and local services have implemented their own career guidance standards.

### LMI provision

- 3.14** There are a range of publicly funded labour market information services available in Finland these include:
- Foreammatti.fi which provides labour market forecasts, skills mapping and information about current open vacancies, average salaries and competences valued by employers;
  - Studyinfo (<http://www.opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/>) which provides information on courses and acts as a central point of information on all education providers and courses across Finland.
- 3.15** In addition the Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment (SECLE), has published a pilot version of a new online tool for anticipating skills needs - Osaamistarvekompassi.fi - due to be finalised in 2024. This provides forecast data jobs in transition as well as short -term skill needs in an accessible format for individual users. This intelligence is used to allocate SECLE resources.

<sup>30</sup> <https://kotoutuminen.fi/en/act-on-public-employment-and-business-service>



## Co-operation and co-ordination structures

- 3.16** The development of strong structures for co-operation and co-ordination of career guidance has been an important feature of the Finnish guidance system (Cedefop, 2021). This feature can be seen at all levels of the system.
- 3.17** The existence of a jointly endorsed National Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2020-23 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021) demonstrates a level of inter-ministerial co-operation around guidance at the governmental level. This is primarily about effective co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry for Economic Affairs as the two main ministries involved in the delivery of guidance. This is supplemented by national stakeholder involvement in the Lifelong Guidance Working Group, which includes representatives from both of the main ministries and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health, and the Ministry of Finance as well as relevant government agencies, NGO's, trade unions, employee organisations, and practitioners. The Lifelong Guidance Working Group is an advisory body which shares information about career activities, policies and practices and provides strategic advice to the ministries.
- 3.18** In addition to the national Lifelong Guidance Working Group, there are 18 regional fora. These regional fora reflect the stakeholder mix on the national group, including both governmental representatives and key delivery partners and beneficiaries. The regional fora are also represented on the national group to help to connect national and local policy and delivery.
- 3.19** Despite these strong structures for co-operation and co-ordination some interviews still identified challenges in ensuring that the whole system functioned effectively together. The process of co-operation and co-ordination is best understood as an ongoing work in progress.
- 3.20** Many interviewees argued that Finland is currently going through a major shift, with control of the guidance system, and other related policy areas being devolved to local government. Devolution brings both advantages and challenges. Advantages include the ability of these local systems to identify local priorities. However, challenges include the lack of consistent funding for guidance services, as well as the lack of regulation around funding and resourcing for services, which creates inter-regional inequity and intra-regional inequality of access.. There is also the potential for reduced efficiency in the devolved system, with each region having to establish and maintain the basic infrastructure for themselves.

## Delivery structures

- 3.21** The Public Employment Service (PES) is central to the delivery of career guidance to adults in Finland. The PES is primarily publicly funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. PES provision of guidance is delivered through a network of Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE offices). In 2025 responsibility for PES services will shift from central government to local municipalities. Most services are free to users (which includes both employed and unemployed people) (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020). However, some

special services, such as outplacement services, are offered to companies for a fee. The PES also offers a telephone careers guidance service which is more easily accessible for some than the face-to-face service, particularly those in remote areas. There is a growing policy aim to offer more guidance services online. In addition to its main guidance services, the PES also offers specialist services such as vocational rehabilitation services, for those people who are suffering from long term illnesses, and guidance services for migrants (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020).

**3.22** Young adults can also access guidance through the ‘one stop’ centres that provide young people under 30 years old with information, advice and guidance on a walk-in and easy-access basis and through multiple channels (e.g. face to face, online, phone) (Kettunen & Felt, 2020). The one stop centres act as a single access point for other services provided by central and local government. In addition to careers guidance, which is typically provided by the PES, such centres also provide other services relating to health, social care, housing and other concerns. There are around 65 centres in Finland. Consultees reported that there was significant regional variation in size and services offered by the one stop centres. In some areas there are plans and pilot schemes to introduce a similar one-stop service for older people, however there was some disagreement as to whether this would best be organised by expanding the existing one-stop centres or by creating a new, parallel network focused on older adults.

**3.23** Adult education and training is available to everyone aged 19 and over. This includes vocational, liberal and higher education, as well as general and basic education. There are three main sources of guidance for those seeking to return to education. The PES, the educational institutions themselves who provide some guidance and consultations with prospective students, and the online Studyinfo (<http://www.opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/>) site which provides information on courses and acts as a central point of information on all education providers and courses across Finland. Measures that have in the past enabled adults to access training are being limited by the 2023-elected government. A sabbatical system and grants for adult learning have been terminated and the tuition fees for open universities have increased. The limits to access to training will inevitably limit access to guidance at educational institutions.

**3.24** All educational institutions have a statutory obligation to provide careers guidance for students during their studies, and up to a year after they graduate (this doesn’t include higher education), though the quality of the guidance offered by providers varies between institutions. Some work closely with other stakeholders, such as the Lifelong Guidance Forum, and thus build stronger collaborative relationships with PES and other agencies, others less so. Funding for a coordinator role to increase collaborations used to exist, however this has since been cut. Institutions are also required to draw up a personal competence development plan for each student that charts and recognises their skills, outlines the competencies they need, as well as support required. The aim of this plan is to allow students to choose studies that support their career goals.

- 3.25** Outside of the public sector individuals can also access some employment and career guidance services via private recruitment agencies and through purchasing private career guidance services on an individual pays basis.
- 3.26** Trade unions also play an important role in Finland's adult careers guidance landscape. Guidance services delivered by the trade unions are funded through a mix of member subscriptions and collective agreements with employers. The services provided include job searching support, career planning assistance, and wellbeing-related services delivered through a mix of webinars, self-study resources, and one to one discussions for members. These cater to members' careers at various stages including early career, career change, impending redundancy, and unemployment. Interviewees highlighted that trade union services supplement and extend the kinds of services provided by the public sector because they offer a higher level of occupational and sectoral expertise than is possible in more general services. Employers are generally supportive of this provision and view it as beneficial for their employees' development and well-being. One particular area in which trade union support is beneficial, is in the instance of large-scale redundancies, such as the closure of a shipyard. It reported that, in such events, trade unions have greater knowledge of their member's skills and the industry, and can respond more quickly than government services.

## The workforce

- 3.27** Finland has a strongly professionalised system of guidance (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020). Within the education system careers professionals are required to have a master in guidance. There is less stipulation on the qualification levels of those working in the PES and other elements of the Finnish guidance system. However, vocational guidance psychologists in the PES are required to have a master's degree in psychology. All other labour administration staff receive in-service training hosted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The National Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2020-23, has delivered a national competency framework and an assessment tool for career professionals (in 2023) with a comprehensive evaluation of the training of career practitioners published in February 2024.
- 3.28** Adult career guidance professionals are represented by two primary bodies, the Finnish Association of Guidance Counsellors and the Finnish Psychological Association. These bodies represent professionals, set ethical standards, and set guidelines on correct professional conduct among guidance counsellors.

## Individual engagement

- 3.29** Adult careers guidance is available to all, though services are provided by a range of organisations depending on the user and their needs. So for example, services delivered through the PES (both in physical centres and online) are accessible to all adults over the age of 18, while those delivered by the one stop centres, are currently only available to those aged

16-29 years. While trade unions provide services for their members and educational organisations for their students.

**3.30** As Finland is a bilingual country there are also parallel services available to Swedish speakers, particularly in the areas of the country where the Swedish language dominates. There are also some specialist services available for specific groups such as migrants, prisoners and ex-offenders.

**3.31** There was limited hard data available that provided insights into the volume of use of Finnish guidance services. However, all interviewees agreed that services were well used and that there was little spare capacity to increase usage at the present time. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has appointed the Finnish Institute for Educational Research to collect and conduct research which can be used as an evidence base for regional and national decision-making in lifelong guidance.

## Emerging lessons

### Legislative framework

**3.32** Finland combines a clear entitlement to adult career guidance that has a legal foundation alongside a National Lifelong Guidance Strategy. The strategy considers the role of guidance across policy areas, and integrates concepts such as lifelong career management skills and career development throughout a working life, it also sets out key principles for the service such as quality, cross-sector and evidence based. This combination of legal framework with underpinning concepts and principles provides a sound basis for funding services.

### Infrastructure and cooperation structures

**3.33** Finland demonstrates that even in a co-ordinated guidance system (that sits across the key government departments) there are likely to be substantial challenges in ensuring alignment of strategy with practice and avoiding overlaps in gaps. The Finnish case study emphasises:

- The importance of a national strategy.
- The need for structures for co-ordination at ministerial, national and local level.
- The value that is offered from the broad engagement of stakeholders beyond government.

### Career guidance in the public employment service

**3.34** The public employment service is at the heart of Finland's adult guidance service. It has a national footprint, well trained professional staff, is open to both unemployed and employed workers and involved in a variety of co-operative arrangements with other providers.

### Physical accessibility

- 3.35** The one stop centres provide an interesting model. The attempt to bring together all public services into a single access point has the potential to increase public awareness of what services they are entitled to and to support effective referral and inter-professional learning.

### Building the role of trade unions in the delivery of guidance

- 3.36** Trade unions in Finland are well placed to provide career guidance support for working people and those who are recently out of work, but who associated with a particular sector. The fact that this service is paid for through a mix of member subscriptions and employer contributions (agreed through collective bargaining) is important as it offers potential savings for the public purse.

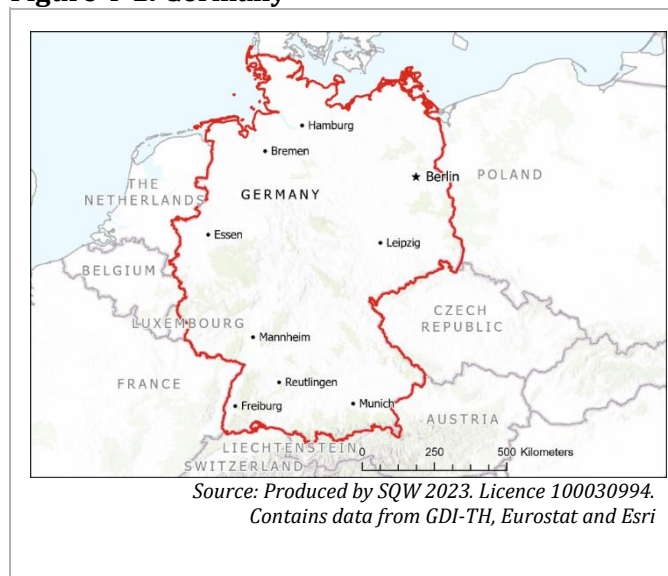


## 4. Germany

Jo Hutchinson, Peter Weber & Tristram Hooley

### Geographical Context

**Figure 4-1: Germany**



**4.1** Germany is a central European country that borders 10 other countries. Germany is both the physically largest of the four core case study countries, with a surface land area of 349,000km<sup>2</sup> (World Bank), and the largest economy, with a GDP of \$5.3m in 2022 – the fifth largest single nation economy in the world (OECD<sup>31</sup>).

**4.2** In June 2023, DeStatis (the German national statistics provider)

estimated the German population at 84.5m, and 63.8% of these are working age, to one decimal place exactly representative of the EU average (63.8%). However, German workers are disproportionately paid less, with 17.0% of the population paid less than two-thirds of the median earnings ('low pay') compared to 16.7% for the UK and 13.9% for the OECD average.

**4.3** Germany has the lowest proportion of unemployed young people (aged between 15-29) of the four case study countries, at just 5.9% in 2022, lower than the UK (10.5%) and the OECD average (10.9%) (OECD<sup>32</sup>). However, only 37.3% of the population possessing some form of tertiary education, compared with the OECD average of 40.7%<sup>33</sup>. The number of apprenticeships has declined from a pre-Covid peak and now stands at 466,200 new contracts compared with 510,900 in 2019<sup>34</sup>.

**4.4** In 2022, Germany has the second highest number of permanent immigrants of any OECD country (641,000) – second only to the United States (1.04m) – and this pattern of US first and Germany second has been true from 2012 onward.

<sup>31</sup> OECD (2023), Gross domestic product (GDP) (indicator). doi: 10.1787/dc2f7aec-en

<sup>32</sup> OECD (2023), Unemployment rate by age group (indicator). doi: 10.1787/997c8750-en

<sup>33</sup> OECD (2023), Adult education level (indicator). doi: 10.1787/36bce3fe-en

<sup>34</sup> Destats (2023) Press release 144. Vocational training in the dual system

[https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2023/04/PE23\\_144\\_212.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2023/04/PE23_144_212.html)

**4.5** Germany is an interesting case study for this research because it is a large country with regions that are very distinctive in their culture, socio-economic profile and politics. It has strong regional identities and regional infrastructures that require a balance between the national governments and those of the Länder.

### Sources of evidence

**4.6** This case study has been informed by the key reports (in English), and websites listed below as well as consultations with 16 people from the following organisations:

- Senate Department for Labour, Social Affairs, Equality, Integration, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination (Berlin)
- State Network for Continuing Education Counselling (LNWBB) (Baden-Württemberg)
- Federal Employment Agency
- Berufsberatung im Erwerbsleben (People in Employment service - Federal Employment Agency)
- Employment Agency for city of Wiesbaden (Federal Employment Agency)
- Dvb Professional Association
- Society for Innovative Employment Promotion (GIB) (North-Rhine-Westphalia)
- Universities of Giessen and Duisburg-Essen
- National Guidance Forum
- a Trade Union
- Volkshochschule Freiburg and Volkshochschule Reutlingen
- Self-employed careers counsellor.

### Key reports

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2017) Lebensbegleitende Berufsberatung – Fachliche Umsetzung der Beratung vor dem Erwerbsleben. Accessible at:

[https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/datei/Weisung-201810016\\_ba021961.pdf](https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/datei/Weisung-201810016_ba021961.pdf)

Cedefop (2020). Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices – Germany. Accessible at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-germany>

German National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment (2022) Career Guidance in the Life Course – Structures and Services in Germany” Accessible at: <https://euroguidance.eu/career-guidance-in-the-life-course-structures-and-services-in-germany>

Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2022) National continuing education strategy. Accessible at: <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Arbeit/Aus-und-Weiterbildung/Berufliche-Weiterbildung/Nationale-Weiterbildungsstrategie/nationale-weiterbildungsstrategie.html>

Euroguidance (2023). Guidance System in Germany. Accessible at: <https://www.euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems-and-practice/national-guidance-systems/guidance-system-in-germany>

OECD (2022). Career Guidance for Low-Qualified Workers in Germany. Accessible at: <https://www.oecd.org/employment/career-guidance-for-low-qualified-workers-in-germany-5e6af8da-en.htm>

## Organisation of the adult career guidance system

### Policies, drivers and rationales

- 4.7** Career guidance services in Germany for young people as well as adults were, until the turn of the century exclusively provided by the public employment service. It remains a very important part of the system, but many other agencies have moved into the service over the past two decades. Career guidance for adults has been developing over the past ten to fifteen years as economic restructuring has generated a need for people to re-train and adapt their working lives.
- 4.8** Consultee feedback identified two key policy priorities for adult career guidance in Germany, to address the overall shortage of skilled workers, and, to ensure services were available and relevant for all. The federal government is responsible for employment policies and vocational training including career guidance, while career guidance in schools falls under the responsibility of the Länder. National policy is underpinned by the German social code III (*Sozialgesetzbuch*). This mandates the Public Employment Service in Germany, the Federal Employment Agency (FEA - *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*), to offer career guidance, free of charge, to all adult citizens who are either in the labour market or who are intending to enter the labour market. In addition, the 16 Länder are mandated to provide career guidance services to their constituents. In 2017, the FEA's revised lifelong guidance strategy (*Lebensbegleitende Berufsberatung*), highlighted the need to create more skilled workers for the German economy. In 2018 the law on 'improvement of qualification opportunities' (*Qualifizierungschancengesetz*) expanded the pre-existing legal mandate to include the provision of guidance to employed adults, as well as entitling them to more vocational training and associated financial support. The National Continuing Education Strategy<sup>35</sup> aligns the work of the FES with skills development even further and provides provisions for greater co-ordination of services and support for people already in employment.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Arbeit/Aus-und-Weiterbildung/Berufliche-Weiterbildung/Nationale-Weiterbildungsstrategie/nationale-weiterbildungsstrategie.html>

## Funding

- 4.9** Funding for Public Employment Services is mostly by social insurance – paid through taxes by employees in stable socially secure jobs (excluding freelancers and the self-employed), and federal taxes. Services are re-commissioned every three years.. Some programmes have also benefitted from European Social Fund support. Within the Länder additional funding is provided according to local priorities and need. Some Länder such as Berlin, Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Hessen, Niedersachsen have long-established programmes in place to support career guidance for adults.

## Labour Market Information

- 4.10** LMI in Germany comprises a labour market monitor which provides information about employment and unemployment by sector, occupation and region. It provides trend data and also forecasts of labour market activity. Information is available through a range of websites that provide information about educational systems and structures, and searchable systems that provide information on course availability for continuing and higher education. The FEA provide an online jobs board, resources to support job-seekers and a database with occupational profiles (National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment, 2011).
- 4.11** National information is adapted to regional circumstances to be used by practitioners and service-users. We were told how this is done in North-Rhine-Westphalia where the *Gesellschaft für innovative Beschäftigungsförderung* (Society for Innovative Employment Promotion) provides insights by collating monitoring data from the 16 regions within North Rhine-Westphalia (a region covering 8 million people). Experts then interrogate and interpret this data at regional workshops, and their insights alongside other information about regional issues (such as changes in technology, demography, and climate change) are used to explore present and future demand for skills and training. This is important because national issues (such as digitisation or the move to net zero) affect places differently according to the structure of the regional economy.

## Cooperation and coordination structures

- 4.12** The German ‘National Guidance Forum for Education, Career and Employment’ (NFB - *Nationale Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*) provides oversight of career guidance. The NFB was established in 2006 as an independent network of organisations and experts that promotes the quality delivery of counselling services across Germany. Members of the forum include training centres, professional associations and trades unions - government ministries and the FEA also attend, but only in an observational capacity. The NFB is part of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), an international organisation with similar aims. The forum has periods when it is very active and engaged with government when policy changes are being discussed or legislation drafted,

and other periods when it continues to advocate for effective guidance services and to maintain policy attention.

### Delivery structures in Germany

#### Public Employment Service (FEA)

- 4.13** The FEA provide careers information, as well as job placement advice and support. The service is primarily focussed on supporting adults into paid employment or relevant training and education. Its employment counsellors assess their clients' skills, competences and personal situation to create a personalised action plan and use an IT system (*VerBis*) to support this process. More intensive support is offered to clients with more complex support needs to prevent long-term unemployment (Cedefop, 2020). The FEA is also mandated to support additional services as needs are identified. For example, there are services and systems designed specifically for migrants run by the Federal Authority for Migrants and Refugees. The FEA's mandate evolves subject to needs or to explore innovation in service delivery, for example a telephone based guidance service was developed but subsequently withdrawn due to funding limitations and competing national priorities.
- 4.14** The FEA has traditionally been a service for unemployed people but more recently its remit and focus has expanded to support adults in employment as well with a particular focus on low skilled adults and people working in small and medium sized businesses<sup>36</sup>. It is well placed to do this because it has an extensive network of offices and staff with relevant skills. This reflects the policy priority to upskill workers as well as to ensure high levels of employment. However, it still is associated with unemployment support and benefits' sanctions and we were told that this may create barriers to access for some groups.
- 4.15** Youth Employment Agencies (part of the FEA) run a separate service for all young adults under the age of 25 years that offers social support, career counselling, and work coaching. These programmes are offered with the self-activation tenet ("Do something for yourself, we help you.").

#### Other public provision

- 4.16** Regional services vary enormously reflecting both local need and political priorities. Consultees explained that in some regions there were limited additional provision whereas others were well-known as examples of good practice. For example:
- The [Berlin Way](#), complements FEA provision and is dedicated to bring services closer to those in need through a network of 10 service centres run by independent or non-profit organisations that deliver a service under a single quality management framework. It provides independent advice and guidance to connect people with education and training

<sup>36</sup> Linked to a range of measures included in the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's National Continuing Education Strategy.



opportunities. They see this as an extension of FEA support because they public employment services may not be able to offer the time or advice that an independent provider can.

- the Baden-Württemberg State Network for Continuing Education Counselling (LNWBB) which has 180 network members who provide career guidance services to support access to further education opportunities
- Wegweiser Bildung work with different partners including Volkshochschule Freiburg. They have several bases including a permanent site in the city library. Their purpose is making sure individuals understand the educational opportunities open to them. The majority of activity is delivered in person, to ensure the guidance is accessible, and by a team of professionals supported by around ten community based 'pilots or guides' who they train to talk in their communities about the services. In one year, the service supports around 2,000 people.
- In North Rhine-Westphalia: The Society for innovative employment promotion (GIB) employs 90 professionals in four areas: services for adults, young people and vocational education: support for community-based counsellors, the long term unemployed including women, refugees, to support reintegration in the labour market, the fourth area is the development of regional labour market information.

**4.17** We were told that the examples of good and continuous practice within Länder were well established and relatively stable. However, this is not the case in all Länder and services differ in different areas. Because the funding comes from Länder governments services were more likely to be shorter run projects, set up to address a specific issue but vulnerable to funding cuts and limited sustainability. We were also told that while the FEA offered good quality services from well trained and paid staff, the nature of provision in the Länder was sometimes not comparable in terms of its professionalism.

#### Other provision

**4.18** The regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry (funded by employers' membership fees) sometimes offer guidance services in the context of raising awareness of, and interest in, vocational learning opportunities. The Chambers are influential in local areas and often run their own training courses which creates a need for independent guidance services.

**4.19** Trade unions are an important social partner in Germany. Trade Unions work with employers and governments in several ways; at a strategic level to articulate the ambitions of guidance services (for example with the NFB), they also support the development of vocational standards and associated training, and, they work to integrate career guidance into the system. Trades Unions generally do not offer career guidance services to members, but may do so if they are commissioned by the government to offer a specialist service. In addition we heard about an example of a project modelled on the UK's UnionLearn initiative which is

funded by the Ministry of Education to train peers in the workplace to offer educational guidance in or near the workplace. These are not highly trained counsellors, rather they raise awareness of training opportunities and provide information to their workplace colleagues.

- 4.20** Employers are involved in career guidance at a national level to guide policy. We were told that German practice is to seek a consensus model of decision making including through work councils in larger companies. These have a duty to inform their workforce about continuing education qualifications, but this is not consistently exercised given their workload and competing priorities.
- 4.21** Local municipalities have adult education centres which have a long tradition of general further education. Some cities have also for decades offered adult guidance services (for example in Köln, Hamburg, and München), and this has been expanded over the past twenty years with programmes from the National Ministry of Education to expand the number of cities that provide career guidance.
- 4.22** There is a private sector for career guidance services but it is not extensive as people are used to guidance services being free. The private and commercial career guidance providers are usually high standard providers with membership of professional associations. Most private counsellors are psychologists, as psychosocial guidance is a common approach. We spoke with one freelance practitioner providing career guidance support to individuals who approach them for guidance services, but they also needed to supplement their income with a commission from the German Pension Fund (which will refer individuals with health issues for an independent assessment of what work, if any, they can do and whether they are eligible for a government pension).

### The workforce

- 4.23** In Germany anyone can call themselves a ‘career guidance practitioner’ as it is not a regulated profession. Individual providers or Networks define the minimum qualification requirements or experience they expect of their practitioners.
- 4.24** The FEA set high minimum requirements to be a career guidance professional, which usually is a degree (bachelors or masters) in any subject, and some additional training. Alternatively, the FEA offers its own qualifications through the University of Applied Labour Sciences (HdBA), including a three year bachelors in ‘Counselling for education, career and employment’ and a two and half year masters in ‘Labour market-oriented counselling’. A large number of FEA career counsellors have followed this route.
- 4.25** Professionals working on the ‘People in Employment’ (FEA) programme also go through an additional training and certification at the University of Applied Labour Studies which helps them to adapt generic practices to the needs of their specific target groups.

- 4.26** In addition, in-house training is offered to FEA staff at local job centres and regional agencies. We were told about local teams organising training opportunities for themselves, for example, supervision and case reflection with colleagues or external professionals to share best practice ideas.
- 4.27** Different standards apply to career guidance practitioners in the Länder and we were told that in some areas these are comparable to the FEA. For example, Baden-Württemberg State Network for Continuing Education Counselling (LNWBB) delivers 6-7 optional trainings a year for practitioners, alongside networking meetings for institutions to exchange information, experiences and knowledge. However we were also told that the minimum expectations of people delivering guidance in some settings were too low and that people offering career guidance services should be educated to at least a Bachelor's degree level, and be supported to ensure that their practice went beyond offering information.
- 4.28** There is no single quality standard for adult career guidance services in Germany meaning that services operate differently in different places with no consistency in terms of quality or breadth. To help address this the National Guidance Forum produced a framework for quality development and competence profile (*BeQu – Beratungsqualität*) which includes standards in five different areas: overarching principles, counselling competencies, process standards, organisational standards and societal context and objectives. Organisations can elect to adopt these standards if they choose. In different Länder the BeQu Standards or comparable models are adopted and used. Some Länder use in addition a Monitoring System (e.g. Berlin and Baden-Württemberg).
- 4.29** The FEA has its own quality management department for its guidance services, and has created a series of quality manuals (*Beratungskonzeption*) that set internal standards for guidance on issues such as vocational orientation, unemployment integration into work and integration of those with complex needs. FEA also collects frequently a systematic customers feedback (*Beratungsindex*) and publish the results internally.

### Individual engagement

- 4.30** The FEA is focussed on job-support for unemployed people with some extensions into guidance for adults in work, or adults who are not supported through services that support unemployed people. FEA's *Berufsberatung im Erwerbsleben* (People in Employment) programme operates through 39 local networks across Germany and has four target groups:
- employed people looking to change career, for example due to a health situation, to secure more highly qualified work (to establish a more stabilised income), or to enhance their work satisfaction
  - people who are trying to re-enter the labour market after a break
  - people who are in placement services but have complex cases

- people who have finished vocational training or higher education.

**4.31** At present, the strategy is to focus more on the two target groups, people in employment and people re-entering employment. This is linked to the policy ambition to support and develop skilled workers in Germany. In 2022, the service reached 150,000 participants and as of July 2023 the service had already reached 100,000 in 2023. At present, the ‘employed’ target group is reached relatively well (50-60% of the clients are employed), while just 5% are those re-entering the labour market. It was noted that in both cases, there was potential for more participants to be reached.

**4.32** Some organisations also offer tailored career guidance support for specific groups. For example, as mandated by Social Code IX, people with physical and mental illness and disabilities have access to special support to ensure integration into the labour market, including specially trained guidance counsellors in FEA. Another example is that the FEA, in association with the Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, offers support tailored to getting those who have taken time out of their career to care for children back into work.

### Emerging lessons

#### A well-resourced national provider

**4.33** The FEA is a very well established and well-known service. It provides lifelong careers support for young people and adults within its broader remit of providing support and benefits for people who experience unemployment. It has a local presence with offices in towns and cities across Germany. It is legally mandated and adequately financed to provide services. Its staff are qualified and are trained in a guidance qualification at level 6 or 7 and operate to a quality standard.

**4.34** It is therefore well-placed to extend its core services into other services that are a national priority. In Germany, those other national priorities have included the need to up-skill the labour force. Consequently the FEA has developed its offer for ‘People in Employment’.

#### Actions to bring services to where people are

**4.35** While the longevity and variable quality of services offered to particular groups through the Länder were raised as important issues, the principle of ensuring that guidance services are accessible to everyone by bringing them to the groups that need them was clearly valued. We were told about a range of different approaches to achieving this that included having ‘service centres’ in different parts of a city, or training community leaders to connect people in their networks to services. In Germany, these services have recently been focussed on helping to connect migrants with education systems and work opportunities. Other examples include the work of Chambers of Commerce to connect people to local vocational training opportunities and the Trades Unions that encourage members to seek advice.

### Regional labour market information

- 4.36** Taking robust national data that is compiled by the national statistics agency, and then having a third party to disaggregate it by region, take expert advice and interpret it at a regional level to provide policy makers in the Länder with meaningful data is a good way to provide evidence for decisions about active labour market policies – including the scale and type of career guidance that adults need access to. From the client and practitioner side, labour market information is provided by a combination of national resources (such as occupational profiles), and regional data (vacancies and training opportunities).
- 4.37** We were told about these systems, that they had been in place for many years, that people know about them and used them and while they were not talked about as being especially innovative, they were nonetheless robust, functional and reliable. The combination of having a well established infrastructure, consistent years of practice and an accommodation of regional requirements works well.

### Co-operation and co-ordination structures

- 4.38** The division of service delivery between national and local, and the range of different services offered in each city or locality over different time periods necessitates effective co-ordination at both policy and operational levels. The NFB provides an infrastructure that has been geared up and down to respond to government priorities and focus over many years. Its composition reflects the social contract model and includes employers and trades unions, alongside service providers, education and training providers, community representation and policy makers.
- 4.39** At an operational level the complex nature of individual needs alongside the various support services that are available to different people at different times makes co-ordination and referral challenging. There is a balance to strike between having core national services alongside locally responsive and flexible provision in terms of quality, accessibility and trust. We were told of one area that had invested in a network to help ensure that local providers were aware of each others' services and could refer clients appropriately. Investment is needed to ensure differentiated services are part of a managed ecosystem.

### In work training for guidance professionals

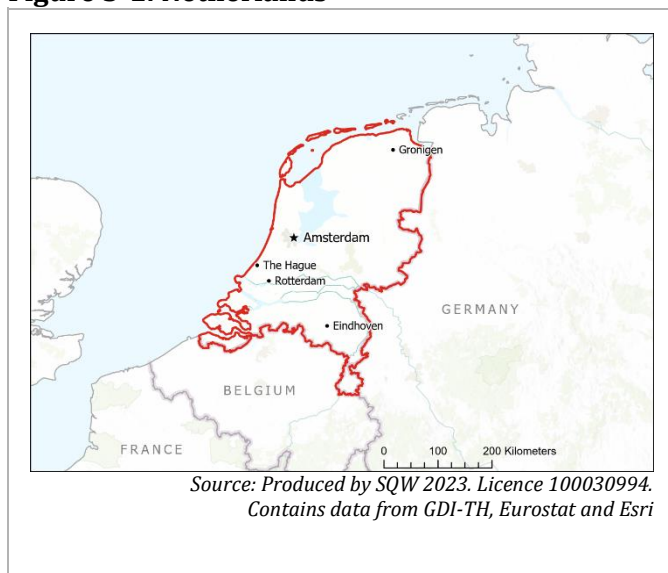
- 4.40** Career guidance professionals working for the FEA can access training and development at Level 6 and 7 to ensure that they are fully equipped for the role from a preferred university partner. They can also benefit from specialist 'top up' learning opportunities from this same provider. This ensures there is continuity of training to a high standard from a provider that can keep the course viable. In addition they develop in-house practices that encourage reflection and sharing good practice.

## 5. Netherlands

Tristram Hooley, Jouke Post & Jo Hutchinson.

### Geographical Context

**Figure 5-1: Netherlands**



**5.1** The Netherlands is a European parliamentary democracy. The country is comprised of 12 provinces which administer much of the delivery of public services. It is a high-income economy with a strongly service based economy. Non-service based industries that are important to the country include agroindustries, metal and engineering products, electrical machinery and equipment, chemicals, petroleum, construction,

microelectronics, and fishing.

**5.2** OECD data show the population to be 17.7m<sup>37</sup> (approximately a quarter of the population of the UK. Its working age population is declining and in 2022, 64.5% of its population was aged between 15 and 64 years<sup>38</sup>. The Netherlands has the lowest proportion of NEET 15-29 year olds in the OECD<sup>39</sup> (4.5%), less than half of the OECD average (12.6%) and the UK (10.3%). In addition, in 2021 the Netherlands had the highest employment rate<sup>40</sup> (80.2%) of the OECD countries, substantially higher than the OECD average (67.7%)<sup>41</sup>. Educationally the Netherlands is similar to the UK with approximately the same proportion of the 25-34 year olds with tertiary education (56.4% and 57.7% respectively).

### Sources of evidence

**5.3** This case study has been informed by the key reports (in English), and websites listed below as well as consultations with 19 people from the following organisations:

<sup>37</sup> OECD (2024), Population (indicator). doi: 10.1787/d434f82b-en

<sup>38</sup> OECD (2024), Working age population (indicator). doi: 10.1787/d339918b-en

<sup>39</sup> OECD (2024), Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) (indicator). doi: 10.1787/72d1033a-en

<sup>40</sup> Proportion of the working age population (15-64 years) in employment.

<sup>41</sup> OECD (2024), Employment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/1de68a9b-en



- Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice
- UWV (Dutch PES)
- Service Centre for Education and Work (Leerwerkloketten)
- NOLOC (Association of Career Professionals)
- Trades unions (CNV, James, OOMT)
- Universities (Open University Heerlen, Welten Institute of the Open University, Eelloo)
- Careers guidance provider organisations
- Self-employed career guidance practitioners

### Key reports

Cedefop (2023). Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Netherlands. *CareersNet national records*. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-netherlands-0>

Euro Guidance, 2022, *Guidance System in the Netherlands* <https://euroguidance.eu/guidance-systems-and-practice/national-guidance-systems/guidance-system-in-the-netherlands>

Post, Jouke (2023), Careers back in line? Towards a career support system *Journal of labour market issues*, Tijdschrift voor arbeidsvraagstukken: <https://www.aup-online.com/content/journals/01692216>

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2023). *Trade union dataset*. <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TUD>

## Organisation of the adult career guidance system

### Policies, drivers and rationales

- 5.4** Responsibility for career guidance is split across three main ministries in the Netherlands, the OCW (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science), the EZK (Economic Affairs and Climate Policy), and the SZW (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment).
- 5.5** There is a longstanding, foundation of Dutch legislation that supports the provision of career guidance in the country. This include legislation focused on unemployed workers (Unemployment Insurance Act, the Work and Income According to Labour Capacity Act, and the Work and Care Act) as well as legislation designed to engage those who are out of the labour market, including those with disabilities, into the workforce. There is also the non-statutory Learning and Working Programme, concerning the Service Centres for Education

and Work, which was established in 2009 and aims to strengthen the connection between education, training, and the labour market.

- 5.6** Despite the legislative framework for career guidance in the Netherlands, historically there has not been much national strategy designed to unite the different elements. However in 2022 the government invested in a strategy and policy measurements to improve lifelong learning and career education/career guidance in the education and public employment sectors (Cedefop, 2023).

### Funding

- 5.7** The Dutch PES receives about 10% of the unemployment benefit insurance that is paid by most citizens. The amount of funding varies according to how the labour market is doing but remains relatively stable.
- 5.8** Funding is not so stable for the Leerwerkloketten as it is more dependent on the policy priorities of regional governments and other local stakeholders.
- 5.9** Funding for trade union based career guidance services is primarily facilitated through collective agreement bargains, where a portion of agreements is paid into a fund to finance activities around improving adult career guidance. In other words, agreements and resolutions between employers and Trade Unions, not only include agreements about wages and hours, but also provisions for career guidance.

### Quality assurance

- 5.10** Beyond the quality assurance that exists for the career guidance profession itself, and internal quality assurance of LMI, the Dutch system has not systematically invested in quality assurance systems.

### LMI provision

- 5.11** The Dutch PES is the main supplier of valid and reliable Labour Market Information (LMI) in the Netherlands. The PES provides labour market and data services for their own staff, other careers providers and individuals. They also publish national and regional labour market forecasts each year on their website. This information is collected on a monthly basis, and can be separated according to profession, sector, and region. There are other private suppliers of LMI but their data is not subject to the same degree of scrutiny or transparency as the PES data.
- 5.12** The PES, working with a range of other partners, is currently developing a new LMI initiative called CompetentNL, based on the Flemish system 'Competent'. The database compiles the hard skills and soft skills associated with occupations in the Netherlands, allowing individuals and professionals to find out more about what a job actually means and involves and to search

for options on the basis of skills, not occupations. A 'hybrid AI' system continuously scrapes data from key sources, such as job postings, to keep this database up to date and relevant to the labour market.

### Co-operation and co-ordination structures

- 5.13** The Dutch system lack strong national and regional structures for co-operation and co-ordination. At the local level the Leerwerkloketten provide a structure for some cooperation, but the extent of this is variable. Other initiatives like the Regional Mobility Teams' initiative during the Covid period provide other, temporary, approaches to the coordination of services. The design and funding of these RMT's for the next years will be determined in 2024.

### Delivery structures

- 5.14** The Public Employment Service (PES) is expanding its work in career guidance. As well as **delivering career guidance** and employment programmes for unemployed workers and those who are not working for other reasons it also provides services for students and workers and other specialist services. The offer of careers advice for the wider population (working people), is a fairly new initiative and at the moment only accounts for a relatively small percentage of the people using the service.
- 5.15** Interviewees commented that the PES had recently shifted its approach to deliver a empathetic form of career support. The rationale given for this change is that there is a growing recognition that having a motivated workforce which understands the skills they have increases the efficiency of human capital.
- 5.16** PES services are increasingly offered via online self-service. UWV online services are available to all job seekers through [www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl). The public programme Leren en Werken also has a portal with information on career orientation, learning and working, based on a step-by-step plan.
- 5.17** Service Centre for Education and Work (Leerwerkloketten) are regionally managed centres which complement the provision available through the PES with adult career guidance provision that includes support on entering the adult education and training system. The Leerwerkloketten are partially funded by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment and partially by regional partners, including vocational colleges (VET) in some regions. In all 35 regional labour market regions, there is at least one physical service centre. These centres are established through partnerships between organisations in the region involved in working and learning, including the PES, educational institutions, municipalities, labour market institutions. Activities and services offered at regional service centres include: career guidance, screening of clients, validation services, support activities, and education and training activities. Typically clients in the Leerwerkloketten are partially working people looking to change career and unemployed people. The Leerwerkloketten also do some work with employers to advise them on career development within their organisations.

- 5.18** Private sector guidance services are widely available across the Netherlands. Individuals are able to pay for career guidance services directly from private sector organisations in the Netherlands. Interviewees reflected on relatively high levels of demand for private services, particularly among highly educated employees. Typical clients are people who are looking to change their lives or work, and who do not want to discuss this with people in their workplace.
- 5.19** Although the individual pays market for career guidance is healthy, it remains relatively small, and individual clients are often supported by their employer or a sectoral fund to pay for the service. In this way the private market for adult career guidance is supplemented by other sources of funding that provide work for careers practitioners.
- 5.20** There is also legislation which exists to support those with long-term sickness to participate in the workforce. As a result, several private organisations specialise in providing services, including career guidance, targeted at helping long-term sick people, including those with injuries (typically work-related), mental health issues, dementia (and other age-related illnesses), get back into the workplace. Funding for this work comes partly from the government through the UWV, insurance companies (when people get injured on the job), and employers themselves. It is important because in the Dutch system people can access sickness benefits for up to two years.
- 5.21** In the aftermath of the pandemic an additional £10 million was found to support people to access 'development advice'. This initiative was largely delivered by careers practitioners in the private sector. Alongside this was the innovative, albeit temporary, STAP budget that was a public learning account providing €1000 for training with additional arrangements for people with lower skills to access advice to help them choose an appropriate option.
- 5.22** Employers, particularly those in larger organisations and government departments have allocated internal resources to employ a career coach or provide other internal career development services for their employees. The core rationale for this has been to support upskilling and improve the quality of the work force. However, there are also other employers who remain sceptical about the value of career guidance and fear that it will lead to retention problems.
- 5.23** Trade unions have established strong provision of career guidance services, supporting people who are already in work. Given rapid labour market changes, especially with the current transition to more sustainable industries and rapid technological innovation, Trade Unions recognise the need for people to become more mobile. Career guidance and other labour market support is therefore important to equip workers and allow them to navigate a more flexible labour market. Trade union services are strongly related to the sector/occupation(s) from which the union draws its membership. They are particularly effective at reaching lower skilled workers because of learning ambassadors' proximity to the workforce.

**5.24** Trade union services include career coaching for individuals, career courses and other services which are typically delivered both online and in-person. One of the key advantages is that they offer individuals the opportunity to access occupationally relevant support without needing to inform their employer. Interviewees report that there is a hesitancy to exchange data with the PES because of the potential implications on unemployment benefits.

## The workforce

**5.25** Adult career guidance practitioners in the Netherlands are represented by several organisations. NOLOC (Association of Career Professionals), which merged the Career Management Institute (CMI) in 2020; and the Register BKA (Stichting Register Beroepskeuzeadviseurs) is the primary source of support for adult guidance practitioners. Others include: NVS-NVL (Dutch Association of Student and Career Counsellors); and LVA (National Association of Study Advisers).

**5.26** As is typical of other countries, there is no specific bachelor or masters programme for career guidance in the Netherlands for career guidance. Indeed the lack of any recognised training at higher levels, was remarked upon by a variety of interviewees as an issue that they hoped to address. Practitioners are mostly trained on the job. In addition there is no government regulation of the career guidance profession. Because of this, many interviewees argued that professionalism in the Netherlands needs to be strengthened, particularly relative to that offered in other European countries. On the job training typically covers a broad range of areas, including counselling, helping people use labour market information, labour policy, methods to help people find the best fitting work (including psychometric tests), diversity and inclusion, entrepreneurship, and knowledge about the schooling and education system.

**5.27** In the light of the limited regulatory environment for professionalism, the Dutch Association for Career Counsellors and Job Coaches (NOLOC) has stepped in to lead a professionalisation agenda which has codified professional standards and ethics. So far around 3,600 practitioners have been certified by and registered with NOLOC. Members who are interested in applying for certification by NOLOC need to have (at least a diploma) from a University of Applied Science in the field of human development, education, sociology, or psychology, and develop a portfolio of training and work, comprising at least 100 hours of career guidance training and 1400 hours of experience all gained in the last 3 years. Decisions around certification are made by a separate organisation that tests the coach for them to get their certification. The organisation is a panel of career guidance counsellors who decide if a person meets the conditions and qualifications NOLOC have set.

## Individual engagement

**5.28** Multiple consultees across a range of service providers and policy experts noted that the Dutch system is characterised by widely available career guidance services, which are accessible but which nevertheless could be more visible to potential service-users. However,

there was wide consensus among consultees that the system is fragmented and not well structured and that private sector and public sector services are largely separate from each other.

## Emerging lessons

### Multi-faceted and differentiated services

- 5.29** The Dutch system uses a range of different actors to serve people's needs. While the PES and the Leerwerkloketten both provide open access to public careers services, people are also able to access additional services through their employer, trade union or the private sector. The fact that the individual is free to choose what is the best service for them puts them in control of when, where and how they want to receive services. This requires a system in which options are known to potential service-users who can make reasoned choices about which service suits them best.

### Stable funding

- 5.30** That the PES is funded from a hypothecated tax (unemployment benefit insurance) means that funding for the core of the Dutch adult guidance service is relatively stable. This has allowed the steady development of services. It has also the potential to provide a stable infrastructure to underpin the rest of the system both through forms of cooperation and through the provision of LMI and resources. Increasing the stability of funding, and through it the stability of the wider system, is an important area that should be attended to as England develops its system.

### A balance between national and regional services

- 5.31** The Dutch PES is a national service which provides some stability across the country around career guidance provision. This is then supplemented by the Lerwerkloketten and other local services which are under the control of local government. This balance between national and local services appears to provide a strong foundation for the local differentiation of services whilst still ensuring a level of consistency of access.

### A strong private sector underpinned by employer and state funding

- 5.32** We have found the best evidence of a thriving private sector in career guidance in the Netherlands. While the individual pays element of this market remains relatively small, it does at least appear to be well understood and, through the efforts of NOLOC, regulated in such a way that individuals can be reassured that the services that they are buying.
- 5.33** The fact that practitioners and organisations delivering private sector careers services can also rely on funding from employers (driven by both employers engagement with career development and by laws requiring support for people who are being terminated after a



period of long term sickness) and on some funding from government, means that the development of a viable private sector is enabled.

### Professionalisation

**5.34** NOLOC, the Dutch professional association, has actively driven a process of professionalisation that has now engaged most of the countries careers professionals and has gained a good degree of public recognition.

### The role of trade unions in the delivery of guidance

**5.35** Trade unions in the Netherlands are well placed to provide career guidance support for working people and those who are recently out of work, but who associated with a particular sector. This service is paid for through a mix of member subscriptions and employer contributions (agreed through collective bargaining) which is important as it offers potential savings for the public purse. This is particularly remarkable as trade union membership in the Netherlands is actually relatively low (15% vs. 23%, OECD, 2023).

## 6. Additional international insights

### Australia: Jobs Victoria

#### Organisation of Jobs Victoria

- 6.1** Jobs Victoria was established in 2020. The two year programme was commissioned and funded by the Victoria State Government to address the impact of Covid-19 on the Victorian labour market. Established on the principles of social justice, Jobs Victoria gave individuals the ‘right’ to career guidance, by providing a free career guidance service for all adults in Victoria.
- 6.2** The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) was commissioned to deliver the service, following a competitive tendering process. ACCE is a not-for-profit, educational charity who deliver career services, education and provide professional development to career practitioners (as a registered training organisation).
- 6.3** Funding for the programme totalled \$13.4 million AUD over two years. The programme used a payment by results model against key performance indicators (KPIs), including metrics around numbers engaged. It was felt that KPIs were ambitious, and this meant that at times, ACCE had to underwrite costs of programme delivery, as the funding did not adequately cover this.
- 6.4** Jobs Victoria was one piece of a ‘mosaic’ of services the Government commissioned to support Victorians into work. The mosaic comprised a range of other services, including employment agencies, training centres and universities, in addition to wider, more holistic services affecting employment, including mental health services. To support Victorians to navigate the mosaic, the Government also established Job Advocates. Job Advocates provided information and signposting to individuals to support them to access the most appropriate agency (or agencies) in the mosaic. Job Advocates were based in local communities, including shopping centres and libraries.
- 6.5** The mosaic supported a collaborative ‘ecosystem’ of agencies. The joined up mosaic, supported by the Job Advocate role, meant that people could access any part of the mosaic and be directed to the service most required. We heard this worked relatively seamlessly. This approach was also reported to have reduced a sense of competition for funding or customers, further enabling a seamless ecosystem.
- 6.6** The mosaic also supported promotion and marketing of individual services, as each agency has clear links to other mosaic services on their website. This was of particular benefit given contractual restrictions on marketing and promotion ACCE was able to deliver for Jobs Victoria.

## Delivery structure of Jobs Victoria

- 6.7** Inception of the service coincided with Covid-19 related restrictions, and therefore Jobs Victoria was, at first, delivered virtually via a call centre with an online booking process. Once restrictions eased, the service began to deliver face-to-face career guidance. We spoke with the delivery partner, who stated that this transition significantly increased the level of demand. Face-to-face career guidance was delivered in the community, and was therefore seen to be more accessible.
- 6.8** Career guidance through Jobs Victoria was delivered by 120 Career Counsellors (totalling 36 FTE roles). The required professionalism of those delivering guidance was stipulated in the contract between the Victorian Government and ACCE. Counsellors needed to be registered with the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA), which meant that they had to be appropriately qualified (with a CICA endorsed Graduate Certificate in Career Development or higher, or an equivalent career development specific qualification<sup>42</sup>). CICA's professional standards also formed the basis of the recruitment process, and were used throughout the programme as a mechanism for quality assurance.
- 6.9** The guidance team included a small number of Career Counsellors from indigenous First Nations communities. Having this representation was considered 'culturally critical' in building career capacity for indigenous First Nations communities. The delivery partner noted that ACCE had a strong background of supporting indigenous First Nations communities which provided a good basis for this, including engagement with community elders, and working with community representatives to co-produce culturally appropriate training courses for career development practitioners.
- 6.10** The Jobs Victoria website included a profile of each Career Counsellor. Customers were able to request a specific Counsellor, including those whose culture or language(s) spoken aligned with their own. This did mean that some Counsellors were busier than others, but it was reported that on average, numbers evened out over time.
- 6.11** Career Counsellors were supported by 16 Team Leaders, two of which were specialists in disabilities and indigenous communities, and an operations team responsible for online and phone bookings. The operations team comprised six Intake Officers who referred incoming calls to the Jobs Victoria career development practitioners, or, if appropriate, to other services in the mosaic. Intake Officers were not required to be qualified career development practitioners, but they were provided with on the job training, and four of these Officers achieved professional qualifications as a result.
- 6.12** In addition to the CICA professional standards, other quality assurance measures were incorporated into the design and delivery of the service. This included embedding the Australian Blueprint for Career Development in the design and conceptualisation of the

<sup>42</sup> <https://cica.org.au/theregister/>

service and a wider evidence base to develop a differentiated service delivery model. Jobs Victoria was also periodically evaluated to ensure quality and assess impact.

**6.13** Engagement with the service was also monitored using weekly dashboards to understand the profile of customer engagement, and also to meet KPI requirements as stipulated in the contract.

### Individual engagement

**6.14** Between 2020-2022, Jobs Victoria was reported to have provided career guidance to 37,000 adults. The profile of customers included:

- indigenous First Nations people, given the availability of indigenous Career Counsellors and extensive cultural awareness marketing activities with these communities, who often rely on word-of-mouth and social media promotion
- women seeking support to return to work
- people with disabilities
- recent University graduates, which was attributed to the limited career guidance available in Higher Education Institutions in Victoria
- career changers who were disillusioned with their current role, particularly early on in the programme when Covid-19 restrictions were in place. It was noted that at the beginning of the programme, career changers was the biggest group accessing the service.

**6.15** Before the service closed in 2022, Jobs Victoria was also working closely with Corrections Victoria, to support those in-custody who were transitioning back into the community.

**6.16** Jobs Victoria aimed to provide customers with a career guidance appointment within two days of their first contact. However, spikes in demand meant that at times, the wait increased to up to six days. When the service was established, there was no cap on the number of career guidance sessions (at 45-minutes per session) a customer could have. However, it was quickly identified that five sessions per person was optimal for achieving results. We heard that this delivery approach validated research undertaken by Florida State University of a differentiated service delivery model<sup>43</sup>.

**6.17** As a result of this learning, the commissioner subsequently capped the number of sessions per person to five. However, CICA were able to seek individual exemptions to deliver up to 12 sessions for those customers who were particularly vulnerable and required more support and guidance. These customers tended to be from non-English speaking backgrounds,

<sup>43</sup> Peterson, G. W., Sampson, J. P., Jr., & Reardon, R. C. (1991). Career development and services: A cognitive approach. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole

including new refugees. Jobs Victoria also found that those who were employed and seeking a career change tended to need less than five sessions.

### Close of Jobs Victoria

- 6.18** Following its initial two-year contract, Jobs Victoria was not re-funded, and so came to a close. We heard of a number of reasons for this decision, including the reduction in the Victorian unemployment rate (which dropped to 3.2%, and therefore considered full employment) which meant the programme was no longer deemed necessary; turnover in Government (with those who conceived the idea of Jobs Victoria no longer in post); and challenges in ACCE meeting the programme KPIs, which were reported to be particularly ambitious.
- 6.19** We heard that ACCE still receive lots of enquiries into Jobs Victoria from potential customers, and while they endeavour to sustain career guidance services, it can only deliver a fee-paying service. This has limited the accessibility of career guidance.
- 6.20** The majority of the other mosaic services were also not re-funded, with the exception of employment agencies which have been provided with federal funding to deliver Workforce Australia, the national Public Employment Service.

### Emerging lessons

- 6.21** The aim of Jobs Victoria was to provide a holistic service which gave individuals the capacity to self-manage and improve their career management skills. We heard that this aim was met, and can be evidenced through impact case studies collected throughout the programme. While the programme was short-lived, there are emerging lessons which are both relevant and transferable to the English context. The experience of Jobs Victoria shows us that:
- Embedding an ‘ecosystem’ or mosaic of services working collaboratively supports effective referrals to enable customers to receive the right service at the right time
  - Delivery of face-to-face career guidance services within the community reduces barriers to access and engagement
  - Having a workforce which is reflective of those it serves results in increased access to and engagement with hard to reach groups (in the context of Jobs Victoria, indigenous First Nations communities)
  - Ensuring that staff are adequately qualified and meet sector-wide professional standards supports quality delivery of career guidance
  - Commissioning existing organisations with the right expertise and existing quality assurance processes to deliver urgent initiatives enables quick mobilisation

- The payment by results model used was not adequate in meeting delivery costs, and seems contrary to established principles of social justice on which Jobs Victoria was based.



## Denmark: Trade Union provision

### Organisation of universal guidance in Denmark

**6.22** Career guidance policy in Denmark is shaped by the Danish Government's declared goal that by 2030, 90% of all young people should be completing a youth education programme before their 25th birthday. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science sponsor the legislative frameworks for career guidance in Denmark. The Danish Consolidation Act provides for guidance within Denmark's education system for young people under 25 years old. In addition, the Act on Study and Career Guidance provides for guidance in relation to transition to higher education. Provision under these two acts includes:

- 'Municipal Youth Guidance Units' that work with teachers in schools and regional centres of Study and Career Guidance Denmark which provides guidance to young people and adults about the choice of higher education
- the national guidance portal; [www.ug.dk](http://www.ug.dk), which provides careers information for young people and adults. (Cedefop 2021).

**6.23** While the system of career guidance for young people is well established, those for adults '*might be described as patchy*' (Cedefop, 2021). An agreement between the government, the trade unions and employers decided that eGuidance would be the unified gateway to adult career guidance from 2018 onwards. This is a service operated by the National Agency for IT and Learning. Initially targeted at young people and their parents, eGuidance now provides guidance services for everyone who wants information and guidance about education and employment and includes digital guidance tools. This service is provided across the extended hours including evenings and weekends (Euroguidance, undated).

### Delivery structures for career guidance for adults

**6.24** Guidance counsellors and job consultants provide services to all individuals over the age of 18 years through the PES which operates 91 job centres and the portal [www.jobnet.DK](http://www.jobnet.DK). This is primarily a service for job seekers.

**6.25** Other provision is through Unemployment Insurance Funds which are voluntary schemes administered through private associations of employees or self-employed persons organised for the sole purpose of ensuring economic support in the event of unemployment. There are 22 funds in Denmark, and member benefits are largely funded by the State. Unemployment Insurance Funds are established to provide unemployment benefits to members who have been in the Fund for at least a year and have been in work for three years. However, they will also provide career guidance for employed members.

- 6.26** Unemployment insurance fund providers have to be independent but many are also run in affiliation with trades unions. In Denmark around two-thirds of the workforce are trade union members (67% in 2018), and one reason for this might be their administration of unemployment funds. (European Trade Union Institute (undated)).
- 6.27** The relative roles of PES and unemployment insurance funds is currently in transition. From 1 January 2024, unemployed people will only be able to access PES services after three months of unemployment. This will leave the unemployment insurance funds to provide support in the immediate stages of unemployment and indeed, unemployment prevention. These services will focus on job counselling.
- 6.28** The organisation of unions in Denmark is complex, with large trade union confederations representing many smaller sector- or occupation-based unions. Unions are independent in party political terms but willing to cooperate with parties that best promote the interests of their members (European Trade Union Institute). Although high, union membership as a proportion of the total workforce is declining as young people are more likely to shop around for member benefits and may not appreciate the role of unions in campaigning and negotiating employment rights.

### Individual engagement with Trade union provision of career guidance

- 6.29** We spoke with one union, [HK](#) which organises shop and clerical workers and has approximately 200,000 members. HK have been established for over 100 years and represents workers in 12 different fields including sales, administration, clinical assistants and laboratory workers. The Union has four different secretariats operating across different geographical regions. However despite their complicated structure the union runs a single career counselling services for its members so that each member can access the same level of service. This service has been established for over seven years. It is called 'Career Telephone' which described its service when it was established but now does not convey the wide range of services that include telephone, web chats, webinars, workshops and other forms of digital engagement. The service employs five qualified careers counsellors who collectively support around 300 people each month.
- 6.30** The service offers career counselling and this service is different to others that offer job search or CV advice. The rationale for the service is that people have long working lives and need support with their career development throughout and not just at times of crisis (e.g. facing redundancy), or at points of transition (to apply for a new job). The service is independent and impartial and will support people to make the right decision for them. It is designed to support people who are in work and taking micro-career decisions such as how to prepare for an annual review, deciding whether to apply for a promotion, how to integrate a new worker into a much older (or younger) team and what professional development might be most appropriate. They can also support strategic issues such as restructuring associated

with net zero or other skills issues. Counselling on these issues helps individuals to manage their career and it also helps employers to keep and develop skilled workers.

- 6.31** The work is skilled and needs qualified professionals. There is a difference between this type of work and other work that might be typical of other trade unions that might focus on career information, or job search and application.
- 6.32** Data and intelligence are important for the Career Telephone team. They keep records of service use so that they can report the numbers of people they support, in what ways, whether they go on to secure promotions or access funded training schemes.
- 6.33** They find their service to be especially popular with younger workers and those aged 50 and over and with those workers who face professional uncertainty either due to economic restructuring or to employer-based issues. The careers team pick up useful intelligence about conditions and communication within sectors or individual employers and can share anonymised insights with their policy and support colleagues within the Union.

### Emerging lessons

- 6.34** The social contract model of managing skills within efficient labour markets is a feature of the Danish system which also embraces the role of Trade Unions within this tripartite model of engagement. There is a dominance of careers support for young people and people transitioning into and out of within the Danish system, as is the need to provide support for people who are in work but want to develop their careers in ways that suit them best.
- 6.35** The experience of the HK union in Denmark therefore shows us that:
- It is possible to provide career guidance and counselling services to employees that benefit the employer
  - Such services can be accessed digitally by a range of different people who would otherwise be facing career decisions with no access to career guidance and counselling
  - They are materially different to the services that PES provide
  - They can be used to make people aware of training opportunities (noting that about half of service users go on to apply for funded training courses).

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## Flanders: Career vouchers

**6.36** In Belgium, decision-making powers are not centralised, but divided between three levels of government: the federal government, three language-based communities (Flemish, French and German-speaking) and three regions (Flanders, Brussels Capital and Wallonia). The regional and community parliaments and governments have jurisdiction over many areas including education and economic and industrial policy. With few powers to borrow funds or raise taxes, about 80% of their spending is from national Belgian budgets. This creates a complex system of government with different structures and practice in different parts of the country. Consequently we focus on Flanders which is the northern, Dutch-speaking part of the country, and home to over half the country's population.

### Delivery structures of adult career guidance in Flanders

**6.37** As with other countries, guidance for adults is either within structures to support lifelong learning or to support people who are unemployed. Decisions about course selection can be supported by learning career counsellors, usually through a leerwinkel ('learning shop'). In Flanders, adult education centres (CVOs) and centres for basic education (CBEs), then deliver lifelong learning and associated guidance services including study support and career counselling.

**6.38** Several third sector organisations also offer career guidance for adults. These include GTB<sup>44</sup>, which supports people with difficulties entering the labour market e.g. persons with severe (mental) health problems. Migrant support is coordinated and facilitated by the Agency for Integration and Citizenship<sup>45</sup>.

**6.39** The Flemish Public Employment Service, VDAB<sup>46</sup>, connects jobseekers with employers. It works with employers to refine their job search and provide employers with candidates for their review, and it works with jobseekers to help them secure employment. Within these services VDAB offers information, mediation, and training. It also oversees the career guidance voucher system.

### Career voucher scheme

**6.40** Career vouchers were seen by the Flanders government as a tool to achieve complementary policy aims; to promote lifelong learning and to encourage people to stay in work longer and do valuable work. Initially the voucher scheme ran as a pilot with ESF support but the government found this too restrictive as people who wanted to access the support had to be turned away if they were in employment. Vouchers were then re-launched in 2013. In the period of 6 years after the launch of the voucher (between 1/07/2013 and 31/6/2019),

<sup>44</sup>GTB website: <https://www.gtb.be/>

<sup>45</sup> Agency for Integration and Civic Integration website: <https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/>

<sup>46</sup> VDAB website: <https://www.vdab.be/> Note that Actiris is the employment agency in the Brussels Capital Region, and collaborates with VDAB.

156.408 vouchers were granted for 113,911 citizens who took up career guidance during this period. In the period of six years approximately 4% of the total number of working citizens in Flanders have attended career guidance using career vouchers.

**6.41** A voucher is available to anyone who has 7 years' work experience in Flanders, and who has not taken up a voucher in the last 6 years. An individual applies for a voucher online. Once approved they are valid for three months. Individuals can access vouchers in two stages; the first is worth four hours of career counselling and the second is worth a further three hours. Individuals are asked to contribute €40 for a career voucher (compared with the real cost which is €169 per hour). The contribution has been shown to increase commitment to the process, fewer missed appointments and more engagement with activities that need to be done between sessions. Vouchers can be redeemed at careers centres that offer services that people want – the choice of provider is up to the individual.

**6.42** The voucher scheme is open to anyone including people who are self-employed. However, it is more attractive to certain groups in the labour market. Vouchers users are:

- High skilled (67%), middle skilled (27%) and low skilled (6%)
- Predominantly female (70%)
- Mid-career with the most common age of users 30-40 years (40%) and 40-50 years (30%)
- People from financial sector are over-represented while those from manufacturing are under-represented.

**6.43** Vouchers can be redeemed at a careers centre that has been 'mandated' by VDAB. This is a quality check to ensure that the services being used are career guidance services (as opposed to other forms of personal growth therapies, mediation or mindfulness). Flemish citizens have a clear entitlement to a quality service with every career counsellor, following standard content for career guidance. There is an expectation that guidance services will generate personal development portfolios (PDPs).

**6.44** A mandated career centre is subject to a legal contract that also covers use of subcontractors. VDAB quality assure organisations that are mandated and those checks include:

- Administrative control: to review signed cooperation agreements with individuals, attendance cards and the PDP per career voucher
- Technical inspection: to review the organisation's tax, debts and quality assurance awards as well as the availability of expertise
- Customer feedback: through satisfaction surveys with a sample of customers
- A business development plan including training and competence testing of career coaches



- Complaints, satisfaction and financial audits.

**6.45** Up to the end of 2019, 275 career centres had been mandated by VDAB. These 275 organisations represented a total of 3,250 local offices. VDAB say this growth of career centres has two major benefits:

- citizens can find an average of 18 local offices for career guidance within a 3 km radius
- the growth of a market for career guidance. Over the last 6 years, the number of career counsellors and local offices for career guidance has increased ten-fold.

### Emerging lessons

**6.46** In most countries there is a limited private market for career guidance. This is due to several factors but we were told in many cases this is a combination of a lack of awareness (people are not sure what career guidance involves and its benefits), negative associations (if experience has been part of a mandated process or associated with access to benefits), or lack of value (because experience in school and higher education has been of a free-to-use service). The use of career vouchers is an interesting approach to stimulate a market for guidance albeit one that is still funded through government subsidy.

**6.47** The benefits of the voucher scheme were shared by the team that deliver them and it is clearly delivering a quality experience that is valued by users at scale in the area in which it operates.

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