

## CAREER GUIDANCE IN KAZAKHSTAN in support of wider economic, employment, social, education and training policy goals

In Kazakhstan, career guidance is defined nationally in legislative documents and in policy rhetoric as ‘social professional/occupational orientation’ (the Law on Employment). In public rhetoric, ‘professional/occupational orientation’ is used more often and corresponds to the term in the Law on Education (профессиональная ориентация in Russian).

### Institutional capacity

Career guidance is defined and regulated within the legal framework established by the following legislation.

The Law on Employment (2016) states that career guidance is one of the active labour market policies for social protection and reducing unemployment and defines the mandate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (MLSP) and public employment services (employment centres) in career guidance. Career guidance is defined as: ‘Social professional orientation as a complex of interrelated activities aimed at providing practical assistance in choosing a profession, changing occupations and improving qualifications, taking into account professional knowledge, skills, personal interests and the needs of the labour market.’ The Rules for conduct of social vocational guidance (2016), which were approved by order of the labour minister, describe the roles, responsibilities and cooperation between regional public and private agencies to implement career guidance. The Law on Education (updated on 7 July 2020) defines career guidance as a process of providing information and consulting assistance to students, so that they can choose a profession and place of study freely and consciously in accordance with their professional interests, individual abilities and psychophysiological characteristics. The law provides no further details on the implementation of career guidance. However, the methodological recommendations on diagnostics and career guidance in secondary education organisations, approved by order of the education and science minister, Republic of Kazakhstan #150 (19 December 2018 and updated in April 2019), provides recommendations on the implementation of career diagnostics, information and career guidance processes for secondary education institutes. This document contains guidelines on the process and role distribution within the secondary school system starting from fifth grade. The process involves providing information on vocations and occupations, diagnostic tests to assess skills and inclinations, and career counselling and guidance. The document does not establish mechanisms for cooperation with stakeholders outside the secondary school system.

The Education Development State Programme 2020–2025 (hereafter the state programme) acknowledges the lack of uniform approach to career guidance and confirms that this task is mostly performed as an advertising campaign by technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education providers. Insufficient career guidance is cited as one of the reasons for low coverage of young people by the TVET system, which is seen as the driver of economic growth and productivity. To address this issue, the state programme provides for the establishment of a Republican centre for vocational guidance and career, mandated to provide methodological support for career guidance implementation in TVET colleges. A mobile application, the Navigator of professions, will be available in

### RESPONSIBILITIES

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (MLSP): development and approval of the rules of conduct of social professional guidance in agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MOES): development and implementation of government policy in education and science and coordinating career guidance efforts in education organisations.

The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs ‘Atameken’: technical and vocational education and training development, social partnership development between education providers and employers.

Methodological support provided by think tanks under the ministries: the Workforce Development Centre (MLSP) focused on Talap (see main text).

### REGIONAL LEVEL

Regional governments (*akimats*), specially designated education and employment departments: organise career guidance implementation at regional level.

Regional chambers of entrepreneurs ‘Atameken’: implement the functions of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs at regional level.

all regions to help applicants to choose their future profession. Employment and career centres will be established in all public TVET colleges and will help in building individual professional development paths for graduates. The non-public joint stock company Talap (formerly known as Kasipkor) was assigned as a responsible agency to develop the centre. However, after the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, this task was pushed further down the agenda and financial resources were not allocated.

For the past few years, career guidance has been focused on popularising TVET education and professions. Weak career guidance is indicated as one of the factors for low youth enrolment in the TVET system. The government believes that properly implemented career guidance will make education supply-driven and by extension will result in more youth joining vocational and technical occupations and TVET. An early career guidance system and large-scale PR campaigns will be implemented to popularise vocational occupations (according to the state programme). The target groups are secondary school students and adult jobseekers. Despite methodological recommendations to start guidance from fifth grade, most school-level career guidance is implemented for ninth grade (basic secondary education after which students can choose a vocational path) and eleventh grade students (general secondary education).

**Coordination and collaboration.** The legal documents define and divide the roles of the various actors in the career guidance system. Provision of career guidance services is shared between the MLSP and the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) at national level. At regional and local levels, career guidance is organised and implemented by local governments, public employment services (employment centres) and secondary schools. In secondary schools, career guidance services are implemented by employment centres, education institutions (secondary schools, TVET institutions and universities) in collaboration with local public authorities and private providers. TVET institutions and universities primarily represent the supply side. The participation of employers is coordinated by the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs 'Atameken' (NCE) and its regional chambers of entrepreneurs (RCE). NCE and RCEs provide information and facilitate interactions with local businesses, enterprises and their workforce demand.

Regarding career guidance culture, there is political support for improvement in career guidance implementation from the highest authority (annual address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, to the people of Kazakhstan on 2 September 2019), underlining the importance of career guidance in the education process. Career guidance is seen as an instrument to promote a labour market demand-driven approach to education. There is high demand for technical specialists on the labour market, which is not satisfied by the education system. Stakeholders understand the importance of career guidance and the conditions that are needed to implement it, which include cooperation, clear responsibilities and funding.

**Coordination efforts at local level.** Local governments cooperate with the RCEs, secondary schools, and tertiary education providers to implement career guidance activities. RCE in Nur-Sultan dedicates approximately 30% of its time to organising career guidance sessions. In some regions, RCE work within the framework of the memorandum with employment centres and the city agreement with the *akimat*, the professional unions' centre and RCEs. RCEs have a designated unit (called the social block or human capital development unit) to implement the above activities. This cooperation allows local governments and RCEs to share resources and make the best use of each other's organisational competences.

Career guidance implementation is closely linked with efforts by local government to increase youth employment and TVET enrolment. Local executive bodies for education, secondary schools, employment centres, TVET and RCEs regularly organise job fairs, open door days, and presentations on selected occupations and employment prospects for secondary school students and their parents. The fairs are used as platforms to deliver information on local employment and vocational training opportunities. These efforts are locally driven and patchy in implementation.

They depend considerably on personalities and internal motivation within local governments, RCEs,

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### LOCAL LEVEL

Local city and district *akimats* organise career guidance at local level (oblasts/regions, cities, districts, villages, rural areas etc).

Public employment services (employment centres) provide aggregated information about the labour market, employment opportunities, education and training opportunities, government employment and social measures and programmes. They provide vocational consultations in which they support jobseekers based on their personal and physiological characteristics, skills, qualifications and interests; and help them to select appropriate occupations and employment.

Secondary schools provide career guidance for students.

TVET and higher education providers represent the supply side and participate in career guidance by visiting schools to present choices for educational and vocational training opportunities. TVET providers are tasked with popularising and advertising vocational occupations that are in demand on the labour market.

Employers contribute to career guidance within the social partnership framework.

Private providers, NGOs and civil society organisations provide career guidance services like assessment tests, career and job market information, career skills development and career counselling.

schools and other entities. For instance, Almaty regional *akimat* initiated the establishment of a centralised youth centre in Taldykorgan city that consolidates all youth services and organisations in the region. The youth centre organises job fairs (in online mode during the Covid-19 pandemic). This example was replicated by Kyzylorda and Pavlodar regional *akimats*. Career guidance for TVET and higher education students is implemented through career centres and is not documented in regulations. The quality and value added of career centres depends on available resources (organisational, financial and individual).

**Evaluation practices.** The effectiveness of school-level career guidance is monitored through a proxy of post-school enrolment in tertiary education and later through employment levels after graduating from TVET and universities. Education system statistics are collected through the National Education Database, operated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The database is integrated with other government information systems (e.g. the labour market information system) for cross-verification and data sharing. The data is entered by education institutions at various education levels. There are some isolated efforts at evaluating and assessing career guidance by private career guidance providers and education centres. One of these is an assessment conducted by the international education centre EDTECH using data on secondary school graduates collected in 2014–2019 through an online professional diagnostic tool called Kasip Test. According to their findings, 13% of respondents indicated that they had not selected a direction of further studies and 10% of respondents selected incompatible subject configurations. According to EDTECH, up to 70% of secondary school graduates have difficulties in selecting a future occupation. EDTECH has operated since 2001 and helps students to prepare for national graduation tests (Unified National Testing and Complex Testing). EDTECH also provides career guidance and professional diagnostic and training services for students and adults.

**Typical qualifications for career guidance practitioners.** Career guidance is not taught as a formal course by tertiary education providers. However, career guidance-related components can be found in the following specialties: pedagogy and psychology, sociology and social pedagogy. In the private sector, human resources specialists are expected to engage in career guidance. However, when it comes to hiring or assigning staff to career guidance in secondary education, qualification requirements vary and are quite flexible (that is, there is no specific requirement for career guidance skills and training). The quality of career guidance implementation depends on the personal commitment of individuals. In mobile employment centres, trained psychologists are employed as personal growth counsellors who implement career guidance activities as part of personal growth counselling for adult jobseekers. One of the priorities of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) is to translate their accumulated experience to the country's education system. This is achieved through the organisation of advanced training sessions and seminars for the country's teachers and the training of students at pedagogical universities. As part of this training programme, NIS annually holds 40-hour training seminars for deputy directors of education. The focus is to improve the pedagogical skills of deputy directors and familiarise them with the principles of the NIS education process. The programme covers topics like community service and the patriotic and moral education of students. In the 40-hour programme, two hours are dedicated to career guidance, where NIS career guidance staff share experience and knowledge in career guidance delivery in NIS. Private providers also deliver nonformal training on career guidance. An example is given in the Individual capacity section and nonformal training for career guidance practitioners subsection below.

Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools is a network of 20 schools, with one in each regional city of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The school network was established in 2008 following the initiative of Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan. NIS were designed as an experimental platform for the research, development, piloting and scaling up of modern models of educational programmes and practices. The network offers educational programmes at levels from primary to high-school education. Pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Status of Nazarbayev University, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools and the Nazarbayev Fund, dated 19 January 2011, NIS were granted a special autonomous status. This gave them flexibility and a degree of academic freedom in developing and implementing innovative approaches to education and research.

## Organisational capacity

**MLSP, MOES, local governments, employment centres, NCE or RCEs** do not have a designated career guidance staff position. Career guidance is one of the top-up functions that specialists are

expected to perform along with their regular duties. For example, in MLSP, career guidance functions are assigned to an expert within the employment department or delegated to the Workforce Development Centre (a think tank under MLSP). Usually this is an expert working on labour market and qualifications analysis, with no specific expertise in career guidance. In MOES, career guidance is split between the secondary education department and the TVET department and is delegated internally to available specialists with no specific experience in career guidance. In NCE and RCEs, career guidance is implemented by human capital development departments and units. Staff assigned career guidance functions have many competing demands and can spend only very limited time on this area. Usually, staff do not get additional resources to implement extra functions and do not receive specialised training. In mobile employment centres, career guidance is implemented by personal growth counsellors who are trained psychologists, though not necessarily in this area.

**Secondary schools:** Although all secondary schools are expected to deliver career guidance, not all of them have a designated career guidance specialist. In most public schools, career guidance is implemented by teaching or administrative staff and school psychologists. According to the methodological recommendations provided by MOES, the following staff are responsible for career guidance in schools: the deputy director for education, classroom teachers, subject teachers, librarians, social teachers, psychologists and medical workers. The methodological recommendations do not provide for a separate career guidance unit; schools can decide on the specific implementation of career guidance. Private schools, schools with a special status (Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools) or public schools with good resources have a staff unit that is specifically responsible for career guidance implementation. At management level, this is usually implemented by the deputy director for education who coordinates with the RCEs, universities and TVET colleges to implement career guidance activities. Career guidance is also a top-up function for school psychologists. However, their main mandate is to work with students from vulnerable backgrounds and suicide prevention rather than career guidance.

**TVET institutions and universities:** Career guidance is an integral part of the admission departments of tertiary education providers. Their main function is to ensure student enrolment, preferably of students who are motivated and well-prepared for their area of study. Career guidance is also implemented by career centres in universities and TVET colleges. Their main function is to facilitate the employment of graduate students. According to the Education Development State Programme, all TVET colleges are instructed to establish career centres starting in 2020, to facilitate the job placement of graduating students. The quality of career guidance implementation in tertiary education varies across providers, depending on available resources.

**Employment centres** are tasked with delivering career guidance to adults, specifically for unemployed people, *oralmans* (ethnic Kazakhs repatriated from abroad) and others. Once employment centres have conducted diagnostic testing, they offer job options or employment measures, which include vocational training, job placement and other measures. TVET organisations and RCEs are involved in helping clients with professional adaptation. The process is described in the rules for conduct of social vocational guidance. Employment centres also operate in mobile mode and have a designated staff unit of a personal growth consultant (psychologist) who helps jobseekers and unemployed people with career guidance if needed.

**Private providers of career guidance services and Civil Society Organizations:** Several private providers and NGOs that operate in the education sector offer career guidance services. Their activity depends on financial resources and often on grants provided by large companies (e.g. Chevron). For example, the Bilim-Central Asia Educational Center implemented the Career Guidance Development Programme for secondary school students in 2015–2019 with funding from Chevron. The same is true of private providers. They invest in the development of platforms, tests and career guidance services, but implementation depends on financial resources from state procurement or grants. For example, the information resource Bagdar.kz was developed by joint stock company Qazproftec and launched in

## CAREER GUIDANCE CULTURE

The dominant career guidance mindset at organisational level is to match industry needs with the supply of a skilled workforce. The labour market is short on specialists with technical and vocational skills and promoting TVET is a predominant aspect of career guidance as implemented by MLSP, NCE, RCE and employment centres.

In order for career guidance delivery to be successful, to enable equitable coverage by quality career guidance of both students and adults, a culture of shared responsibility and cooperation within and across career guidance actors is needed.

Currently, some level of cooperation culture exists on local levels, as exemplified by the cooperation between local governments and the RCEs.

2018 for students and adults. It is designed as a one-stop shop that consolidates information on the labour market, education, training and jobs and provides a range of career guidance services (diagnostic tests and consultations). The company is currently searching for investments to support the development of the system. Qazproftec is a private company that specialises in education-related research and commercialisation of innovations. By working closely with the MOES and the NCE, it draws up resources and information that enable it to develop a unique service and reach the target audience.

**MLSP** is responsible for consolidating, analysing, forecasting and delivering labour market information. This is achieved through a think tank under the MLSP: the joint stock company Workforce Development Centre (WDC). WDC is responsible for administering the Labour Exchange Information System (E-Labour or Enbek.kz). E-Labour was launched in 2018 and its key function is to aggregate labour market information, job vacancies and resume database. E-Labour can be used by jobseekers, students, employers and private recruitment agencies. It is also a working tool for public employment centres. The website contains a diagnostic test and the portal provides links to vacancies that correspond to the test results. Currently, the WDC is planning to strengthen E-Labour with an Occupations Guide module (similar to: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/mobile/craft-and-fine-artists.htm>). The module will provide information on forecast demand for the main occupations, expected salary range, job descriptions, required qualifications, vacancies and information on education opportunities. WDC also plans to show career tracks and progression. The list of occupations will be derived from the National Classifier of Occupations. The findings of the Atlas of Future Occupations, which were described in the ETF Innovations in Career Guidance report<sup>1</sup>, will also be used in this module. Job functions and qualification requirements will be taken from occupational standards, expert interviews and job description analysis. This work is in the planning stage, with no resources allocated yet. There is no dialogue with the MOES at this stage.

## Individual capacity

Career guidance implementation and coordination at individual capacity level is delegated to staff with varying qualifications.

**Secondary school practitioners:** In secondary schools, career guidance functions are divided among staff, including school psychologists. Career guidance coordination and practical implementation, which includes working with tertiary education providers, is implemented by teaching or administrative staff with a degree in pedagogy or subject specialists (IT, physics and chemistry) preferably with links to industry. Often, especially in private schools, English language teachers are tasked with career guidance functions, as they can liaise with international universities and help students apply. Specialists who implement career guidance in schools and other education providers are mostly self-taught and learn on the job through nonformal learning opportunities (e.g. seminars conducted by Nazarbayev University, Nazarbayev Intellectual School and private providers). They respond to student requests and needs. The quality of career guidance provision depends a lot on personalities, individual commitment and engagement. Qualified career guidance specialists are usually educated internationally (in Russia, Europe or America), but it is difficult to retain them due to the salaries offered in public schools, colleges and universities.

**Nazarbayev University (NU):** In 2020, Nazarbayev University established the International Association of School Counselling to support school counsellors' professional development and help high school graduates to choose their future career. The Admissions Department has been holding annual seminars for school career counsellors since 2013, with nationwide outreach. While the initial goal of the seminar was to recruit high-school graduates through well-informed career counsellors, later it involved TVET college career counsellors and private career guidance providers. The seminar is held over two days. On the first day, the university and its programmes are introduced (the open-door day). On the second day, presentations are given on the university's admissions system and career guidance-related topics.

### CAREER GUIDANCE CULTURE

The dominant career guidance mindset at individual level focuses on supporting individuals' careers and life decisions. There is high demand from students, young people and adults for services that help set life goals, find vocations and help career transitions.

This demand is met by private career guidance providers, a variety of coaches and psychologists who include career guidance elements in their practice.

Interviews with private career guidance providers reveal a lack of industry connection and reference to labour market information.

<sup>1</sup> See: Volume I: [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-11/innovation\\_in\\_career\\_guidance\\_vol.1.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-11/innovation_in_career_guidance_vol.1.pdf) and Volume II: [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-11/innovation\\_in\\_career\\_guidance\\_vol.2\\_0.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-11/innovation_in_career_guidance_vol.2_0.pdf)

Secondary schools, private career guidance providers and experts (including international experts) share their insights and experiences. Gradually, the seminar became a platform for career counsellors to share their knowledge and experience in the field. One of the concerns that seminar participants frequently raised was the absence of an association in Kazakhstan that could address issues in this field. In response to this need, the university launched the **International Association of School Counselling**, which was registered with the Ministry of Justice in November 2020. The association's goals are to bring together career guidance specialists from Kazakhstan and other countries; develop a communication platform for career guidance practitioners, partners and authorities; share information and resources; organise seminars, conferences and refresher courses for career guidance practitioners' professional growth; enhance cooperation with career guidance associations from other countries; help secondary school students to choose a future occupation and university; organise internship programmes; and conduct assessment tests among secondary school students to identify their talents and abilities.

**Nonformal training for career guidance practitioners:** Private providers monitor market needs for career guidance and develop products to meet these needs. For example, Qazproftec is planning to launch a short-term course for career guidance practitioners entitled 'Modern technologies of vocational guidance in an educational organisation: professional diagnostics and support' (the implementation is contingent on financing). The course duration is 40 hours, and it is planned to be delivered online. It covers an overview of modern occupations, types of career guidance platforms in Kazakhstan, pre-profile training of schoolchildren, assessment tests, how to deliver career guidance in distance mode, how to deliver career guidance, active methods of professional self-determination (development of a personal professional perspective) and how to deliver career guidance to people with disabilities. The training course is taught by qualified psychologists. It focuses on assessment of students' inclinations and helping them choose an education and career route. It does not cover the labour market and industry connection components.

## ANNEX I: GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

### **COORDINATION MECHANISM TO DELIVER CAREER GUIDANCE TO STUDENTS**

External regulation of career guidance typically comes from the rules for conduct of social vocational guidance. These rules provide a general process description, but no specific elements of quality related to career guidance.

According to the rules, provision of vocational guidance for secondary schools involves the following steps.

- A local executive body for education develops a career guidance schedule, compiles lists of schools and students and submits the lists to the employment centres.
- Employment centres, when needed, subcontract private providers to implement career guidance services (for example they often outsource the assessment of testing services).
- RCEs help to involve local enterprises to inform students about employment opportunities.
- Employment centres and their subcontractors conduct assessment tests for students.
- Employment centres visit schools, where they meet students and parents to provide information on the labour market situation, employment prospects, wages, education and training opportunities. With assistance from RCEs, they bring local businesses to make presentations and organise visits to enterprises.
- TVET and higher education organisations visit schools to present choices for educational and vocational training opportunities.
- Once the test results are ready, a list of students who have ambiguous results and have not decided on their vocation is compiled and students are directed to short-term training courses for further employment.

Local executive bodies for education, employment centres, secondary schools, TVET and RCEs regularly organise job fairs, open door days, presentations on selected occupations and employment prospects for secondary school students and their parents. The fairs are used as platforms to deliver information on local employment and vocational training opportunities.

According to the Methodological recommendations on diagnostics and career guidance in secondary education organisations, the career guidance system in schools includes professional information, diagnostics and consultations. Activities are consulting students, providing labour market information and establishing contacts with the employers. However, career guidance implementation is locally driven and varies in scale and quality.

### **Labour exchange information system**

Labour market information is made available to the public through the digital Labour Exchange Information System (E-Labour). This system was launched in 2018 by the Workforce Development Centre under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The key function of the E-Labour resource is to provide the public with information on employment, job vacancies, database summaries and labour market information. The Ministry of Labour recognised that the volume of information relating to employment and careers is increasing and decentralised. The ministry used modern information and communication technology to improve access to information and established E-Labour to publicise job vacancies, database summaries and labour market information and make it available to the public based on the principle of self-service. The information system accumulates large amounts of data on the labour market, so that public employment centres and their clients can research employment opportunities. Moreover, this information may be used to inform career choices. Thus, it is a career guidance instrument.

E-Labour is open for use by jobseekers, students, employers and private recruitment agencies. It is also a working tool of public employment centres. The website contains an assessment test. A jobseeker can take the career guidance test (the Jim Barrett test) and find on the portal the vacancies that correspond to the test results. There are further plans to strengthen E-Labour with the Occupations Guide module. This module will provide information on forecast demand for the main occupations, expected salary range, job descriptions, required qualifications, vacancies and education opportunities, thus providing the information needed for career planning.

## ANNEX II: LIST OF REFERENCES

The Law on Employment (2016): [https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc\\_id=38847468](https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=38847468)

The Law on Education (updated on July 7, 2020):  
[https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc\\_id=30118747](https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=30118747)

The Rules for conduct of social vocational guidance (14 June 2016 № 516):  
<http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1600013938>

Methodological recommendations on diagnostics and career guidance in secondary education organizations (attachment to the Order of the Minister of Education #150, dated 15 April 2019. approved by the order of the Minister #692, dated December 19, 2018): <https://nao.kz/loader/load/398>

Education Development State Program 2020-2025: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1900000988>

Annual address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev to the people of Kazakhstan on 2 September, 2019:  
[https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses\\_of\\_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana](https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana)

On approval of educational programs for advanced training courses for teaching staff within the framework of updating the content of secondary education in the Republic of Kazakhstan:  
<https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/history/V1600013182/04.05.2020>

E-labour: <https://www.enbek.kz/ru>

Baghdar.kz: <https://bagdar.kz/ru/Proforientation>

Kasiptest.kz: <http://www.kasiptest.kz/>

Edtech: <http://www.edtech.kz/>