

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM IN KOSOVO

Career education and guidance has an important role in delivering both individual and social benefits through supporting engagement with learning and improvement of the functioning of the education and training system. It also contributes to the more effective operation of the labour market and supporting social equity and facilitating social inclusion and social mobility.

The ETF engaged in reviewing the state of national/state-wide career development support systems in Western Balkans including Kosovo. The objective of the reviews is to describe existing capacities and development potentials of career development support systems, not just services or policies, to inform policy and practice enhancement in a system approach, to support the selection of country priorities for further system development and future planning, and to inform on-going and future EU and ETF activities, such as the Youth Guarantee and IPA. The reviews mark a starting point on closer cooperation on the topic in the future.

The review process was led by local experts under the coordination of ETF and included (a) desk research and individual consultation interviews, (b) a national consultation meeting that involved all relevant stakeholders to clarify open questions from desk research, to add details and triangulate desk research findings by listening to different points of views from Ministries of education, labour and youth, social partner representatives, youth organizations, practitioners, employer organizations, sector representatives, researchers, (c) finalization of the review report, translation and distribution, (d) discussion of the findings with national authorities to identify priority areas for further system development, (e) a broad-ranging validation event with policy makers to discuss the review findings and how to move forward in priority areas identified, and (f) lastly, revision of the report that is being published in both English and the national language.

Summary of key findings and recommendations

There are strategies and laws which provide for the delivery of career guidance services for all users (students, jobseekers, youth, etc.), however there are challenges in implementing these laws, strategies that lack institutional support, and changes to the government and its priorities. There is a need to develop secondary legislation to ensure the sustainability of school-based career centers and improve career counselling in the public employment service.

There is no inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination working group at the national level (Education, Employment, Youth, etc.) in the field of career development support although three ministries have already made plans for cooperation in the field. A local career guidance counsel has been set up in Peja municipality but it still needs more work to ensure its sustainability as it has been established and supported by donor. Moreover, donor coordination meetings started in the field of VET before the pandemic but these meetings are held rarely now. EARK is planning to cooperate with VET schools to support student transition from school to work.

The Career Education module as a part of curriculum field “Life and Work” was piloted for students in lower and secondary education but there were challenges to implementing it and for this reason the MESTI is in the process of evaluating the piloting of it and a national model needs to be developed to deliver career education in pre-university education. School-based career centers offer career services for students, the number of such centres established across the country is still small but the MESTI plans to establish other centers. Career information and counselling services are delivered at university level for a limited number of students. Jobseekers registered in public employment service have counselling sessions with employment advisers but this service is limited. Young people benefit from training offered by youth organizations in job-searching skills but this training offer is limited only to a small group of young people. The MCYS plans additional support for the youth organizations which play important role in

outreaching youth from disadvantaged groups. Career development services for formally employed people are offered only for employees working in big companies.

Funding commitments are present across public, private, and civil society organizations, although one of the challenges with public funding is its lack of consistency. The MESTI, MCYS, and MFLT have allocated funding to career guidance in different ways, through teacher payment, subsidizing training programmes, and providing public employment services. Private sector funding is also available, but the donor community has made the largest contribution by introducing and financing new interventions and practices.

The number of people using ICT for career guidance services is still small considering the high rate of home-based internet access in the country. There are no specialized services within public employment offices for providing access to career guidance services for people with a disability, or for other vulnerable groups. However, EARK is planning to work in future in this area.

A variety of digital tools and platforms are available to different public institutions for career guidance. However, a common challenge among all of them is the lack of sustainability both for their maintenance as well as usability. Many public servants need additional capacity enhancement to be able to use these advanced technologies. In the absence of the required skillsets, these systems in many cases remain unused.

There is a level 5 qualification developed for career counsellors and 24 counsellors were trained but the MESTI is planning to develop a new qualification which is compatible with other countries for training career guidance practitioners, and could be used for training career guidance practitioners across education, employment and youth. There is a small number of employment advisers because of staff retiring and the restrictions on recruiting new staff because of the civil servant status. EARK plans training for current employment advisers in career counselling to deal with unemployed young people from disadvantaged groups.

Most of the teachers working as career counsellors in SBCCs also have part time teaching jobs which is not optimal for delivering quality services in career centers. The MESTI is in the process of standardizing the SBCCs to make necessary improvements to enhance the operations of such career centers before replicating it to other schools. Staff working in career centers and youth centers has not always attended certified training. Busulla.COM has occupational information with videos which were developed by different projects. Information about vacancies is advertised on government web sites or private job portals (Kosova Jobs, Portal Pune, etc.).

Three priority policy areas of recommendations for Kosovo

The recommendations do not represent the final solutions but are aimed at guiding policy and practice discussions. They follow the key pillars of this report and cover the system, provider, and practitioner levels:

Coordination and cooperation

- Establish an inter-ministerial working group for cooperation and coordination at the national level with a secretariat (including Education, Employment, Youth, etc.) in the field of career guidance, additionally integrating career guidance as a topic into existing inter-ministerial working groups would be welcomed.

Services

- Creating a unified model of career education (as a preventive measure) and advice at all levels and types of school, including mandatory career education, students' practice periods in companies and other events, the further expansion of school-based career centers in VET schools, the training of teachers/ career center staff, the stable funding of busulla.com, etc.

Quality, professionalization and continuous improvement

Enhancing career counselling for jobseekers and inactive people by focusing primarily on the recruitment of new PES counsellors, their training, the revision of ALMPs, helping NEETs including inactive and disconnected young people to engage and find gainful economic activity (reactivate).