



# Guidance: supporting youth to manage their careers

## Problem statement

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### **Addressed problem: Enabling motivated and positive career choices**

Young people live in a society in which creating sustainable career opportunities is complex. Guidance is crucial to support motivated, smart career-choices and prevent early leaving from education and training for a number of reasons:

- Students or their families may give priority to general education over VET, while VET pathways might very well be the best fit for a student's preferences, attitudes, and , learning style, –allowing students to better explore their potential and take better advantage of career opportunities. Guidance avoids the usual biases about learning pathways, putting the focus on personal skills and interests.
- The vocational nature and often high level of specialisation in VET mean that there are many choices on offer within this learning track. Guidance can help in navigating through the many options of VET and the often complex application procedures.
- Appropriate guidance helps young people understand their learning needs and career preferences based on their strengths and characteristics rather than stigmatising them as “bad students” and generating feelings of inadequacy. It can lead young people to have an active, engaged attitude to education and learning in general.
- Receiving adequate information about the VET programme in which a young person is enrolled or for the occupation he/she will be studying can contribute to a successful learning path. Such information may be about the working conditions, the technical complexity of the programme and occupation, or the jobs a programme can lead to.
- Support during studies can also be key to a successful learning path. Such support may involve help with the choice of a specialization, the transition to the workplace (e.g. for work-based learning), or networking into the occupational community, among other aspects.

## GUIDANCE: SUPPORTING YOUTH TO MANAGE THEIR CAREERS

### WHAT IS IT?

IT IS A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES AIMING AT SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS TO MANAGE THEIR CAREERS AND MAKE EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES MATCH THEIR PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

IT INCLUDES: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES; CAREER COUNSELLING

- EARLY AND PERSISTENT CAREER GUIDANCE IS IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHOOSING VET AS A POSITIVE OPTION
- YOUNG PEOPLE WILL HAVE A MORE ACTIVE AND ENGAGED ATTITUDE TO EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN GENERAL
- STUDENTS WILL BE SUPPORTED AT TRANSITION POINTS – TO OTHER LEVELS AND PATHWAYS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, TO WORK, OR TO A RELATED OCCUPATION

### WHY IS IT USEFUL?

TO PUT THE FOCUS ON PERSONAL SKILLS, STRENGTH AND INTERESTS AND AVOID USUAL BIASES ABOUT LEARNING PATHWAYS

TO HELP STUDENTS NAVIGATE THROUGH MANY VET OPTIONS AND UNDERSTAND APPLICATION PROCEDURES

TO HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR LEARNING NEEDS AND CAREER PREFERENCES

### HOW TO PROVIDE IT?

GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES CAN BE DELIVERED BY PROFESSIONAL AND ENGAGED CAREER GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS

ENSURE COORDINATION BETWEEN GUIDANCE PROVIDERS

OFFER A VARIETY OF GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES (WORK SIMULATIONS OR 'DISCOVERY WORKSHOPS')

INTEGRATE LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION INTO GUIDANCE

SUPPORT SHOULD BE OFFERED BEFORE AND DURING EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND IN TRANSITION PHASES

## Beneficiaries

### Early leavers from education and training

VET schools can help foster smart career choices and prevent early school leaving by providing career education and guidance at an early stage and promoting the development of career management skills. Career education can help identify and engage young people, especially the ones at risk of early leaving. It may be particularly useful to prepare transitions and it can help learners who are struggling with the programme they have just joined to continue successfully on their pathway or to find a new one.

Career guidance is also suitable to help reengage early leavers from education and training. Career guidance services, employment services or social services are well placed to provide career guidance to low-qualified young people.

## Addressing the problem

### Tips: Using career guidance to tackle early leaving

Career guidance refers to a range of activities that aim to support individuals manage their careers and make educational, training and occupational choices match their personal characteristics (e.g. strengths, learning style, etc.). It includes:

- Career information and advice about education, training and work opportunities;
- Career counselling delivered by practitioners with psychological training;
- Other activities to help learners develop career management skills, such as:
  - Assessing (e.g. through psychological tests or skills portfolios);

- Sampling: providing work simulations or learning tasters to allow young people to experiment with career choices;
- Teaching. VET schools may provide career education as part of the curriculum (e.g. a course on self-efficacy, CV and presentation letters elaboration, etc.). It can be delivered either as a separate subject, as part of another subject, or as a cross-curricular subject;
- Mentoring.

Guidance activities can be delivered by professional and engaged career guidance practitioners or other professionals (e.g. teachers) operating at learning providers, careers services, public employment services, or 'one-stop-shops' (e.g. youth (employment) services).

Across the different activities, there are important considerations to bear in mind in order to effectively use career guidance to tackle early leaving. We offer some tips on how to address these considerations:

## **Tip 1: Support young people to acquire career management skills**

Career paths are based on personal choices well or less well thought out. They are constructed throughout life and involve several transitions to and from education, training, paid work, and other situations such as unemployment, care for family members, and civic engagement and volunteering. Effective quality guidance supports the development of career management skills that enable young people to plan and manage their learning and work life paths. It should involve activities to:

- Enable young people to improve their self-awareness – to develop an understanding of their own abilities, aptitudes and interests and how these are relevant to their career decisions.
- Support learners to define (long-term) career goals/plans and to understand how their short-term choices will help them realise their aspirations in a sustainable manner.
- Improve young people's capacity to source information about learning and work opportunities, analyse their requirements, relate this information to one's competences and interests, and decide on informed career choices.

## **Tip 2: Ensure coordination between guidance providers**

Coordination between the organisations involved in providing guidance to young people is important. For VET students in particular, coordination between providers based in the education and employment sectors is essential. Providers need to be aware of each other's services and work together to avoid duplication and ensure that no young person 'falls through the net'. This may require sharing some personal information. When doing so, guidance practitioners have an ethical duty to protect the confidentiality of young people's sensitive, private and confidential information, and need to be aware of the legal requirements regarding personal data protection.

It is also important to work together to ensure that all guidance professionals are aware and up-to-date on the full range of learning opportunities available, and how these meet the needs of the (local) labour market. The objective should be to ensure that the young person is at the centre of the provision of services and is able to access the guidance services he/she needs, regardless of the first point of contact.

### **Tip 3: Guidance should be steered by the young person**

The overall approach to guidance is to enable a user-centred process led by young people and their needs. The role of guidance staff is to support young people via reflective questioning and self-efficacy tools. Self-management of one's competence development in relation to realistic aspirations is at the heart of this approach.

There may also be an informative role of guidance staff in ensuring that young people are fully aware of the range of options open to them. This is particularly important for young people from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds. It is the role of the guidance professional to tailor the support provided to the young person and ensure that strengths are recognised and any gaps in skills are filled, so that the young person can set out on a motivated learning and work life path.

### **Tip 4: Provide guidance throughout life and during transition phases**

Young people need access to guidance services throughout their learning trajectory. Guidance is particularly relevant at transition points, including the transition back into education and training for those who have been away (e.g. working). However, guidance also has a preventive role. It helps identify risk of early leaving from education and training and prepare transitions well in advance. This is all the more relevant to help everyone continue to learn throughout their lives to ensure employability and social participation.

### **Tip 5: Integrate labour market information into guidance**

If a young person has not been given sufficient information about the occupation he/she is learning for (e.g. information on the working conditions, the technical complexity of the occupation, or potential job opportunities), this can contribute to early leaving from education and training. Also, a perceived low probability of finding a job after the completion of VET can discourage students from enrolling or completing their studies.

It is therefore important that comprehensive career guidance covers all these aspects, and includes:

- Short-term support, in which the practitioner provides information about the occupation the young person is learning for. It is also useful to provide information on the generic skills and competences of a learning path and their application in related occupations as to increase the possible career options.
- Support to promote the career management skills and autonomy of the individual in exploring labour market information, identifying information sources, critically analysing opportunities and making judgements about career options and the best way to achieve long-term objectives.

The ability to collect labour market information is crucial for young people making career choices. Tools can include for instance:

- Websites with information on training and job opportunities.
- Websites to explore occupations and career pathways including interviews with professionals.
- Websites with data on employability, salaries and other indicators for different professions or sectors.
- Self-evaluation tools for attitudes and skills relating to specific career pathways.

Cedefop has developed a toolkit to help practitioners integrate labour market information into guidance making use of ICT tools. Practitioners can build their own portfolio of labour market tools they consider useful for informing clients and for developing their own materials.

## **Tip 6: Offer a variety of guidance activities, including work simulations or 'discovery workshops' to allow young people to experiment with career choices**

Career guidance includes a variety of activities that contributes to the development of career management skills. These include:

- One-on-one conversations and group sessions with a career advisor.
- Information/resources from various types of media.
- Support and advice on how to prepare a CV and complete an application form.
- 'Mock' interviews to build up skills and confidence.
- Skills audits to enable the identification of existing skills and competences and inform the development of an appropriate career plan.
- Opportunities for trying out different options based on personal interests and capacities. These work simulations or 'discovery workshops' allow young people to experiment before making a decision on their next step in career planning. An informed decision increases the chances of success and helps prevent drop-out.

## Expected outcomes

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The role of career guidance in preventing early leaving is widely acknowledged. Research suggests that students who have a career plan are more likely to engage positively in education. Systematic career education and guidance can also help at transition points - to other levels and pathways of education and training, to work, or to a related occupation. Quality early and persistent career guidance is particularly important to support young people in choosing VET as a positive option, rather than 'ending up' in VET due to a negative selection process. The following outcomes can be expected:

 INDIVIDUAL	 INSTITUTIONAL	 SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raising awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses and building a career strategy for learning and working</li><li>• Acquiring career management skills</li><li>• Defining learning career goals</li><li>• Developing a positive attitude to learning and education and training</li><li>• Gaining a better understanding of education options</li><li>• Raising aspiration - formulating long-term career plans</li><li>• Making informed choices</li><li>• Improving self-awareness - understanding of one's abilities, aptitudes and interests</li><li>• Lower absenteeism</li><li>• Gaining a better understanding of job roles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased learners' awareness and responsibility in career-management</li><li>• Tailored learning pathways</li><li>• Validating cross-sectoral competences in occupational and qualification standards</li><li>• Reduced risk of early leaving due to wrong or negative orientation, or to a lack of a positive future vision of oneself.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free and accessible provision of information on social and economic opportunities</li><li>• Reduced rates of early leavers</li><li>• Increased progression to further learning and work</li></ul>

## Related protective factors

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**Positive future vision for oneself and positive career choices**

## Related resources

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### Good practices

 Good practice

#### **BOP: Vocational orientation programme, offered at vocational training centres**

*Special focus on BFZ: vocational training centres of the educational institute of the Bavarian Industry and Trade*

The German Vocational Orientation Programme, 'BOP', aims to give students an insight into a wide range of professions. It also aims to inform students about their potential to develop an idea as to which professions might suit them better than others.

 **Germany**

 Good practice

#### **Youth Guidance Centres**

*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning, (UU)*

Danish Youth Guidance Centres organise guidance at lower secondary schools in collaboration with school principals, in order to provide an extra guidance resource to teachers.

 **Denmark**

 Good practice

#### **Foundation Innove, Pathfinder centres (in Estonian: Sihtasutus Innove, Rajaleidja keskused)**

In Estonia, Pathfinder centres provide careers information; career counselling;

 Good practice

#### **JBA - youth labour employment agency**

*Jugendberufsagentur - Hamburg*

German youth labour employment agencies (JBA) bring together career guidance and counselling services in

speech therapy; psychological guidance; socio-pedagogical guidance; and special educational guidance.

 **Estonia**

one single place.

 **Germany**

 **Good practice**

### **Guidance and professional initiation courses and professional initiation courses to diverse professions**

*Cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelles - COIP) et cours d'initiation professionnelle à divers métiers - IPDM)*

In Luxembourg, Guidance and professional initiation courses (COIP) include a traineeship of one week or a longer period in a company, and practical classes provided by teachers in a workshop format.

 **Luxembourg**

 **Good practice**

### **Orienta4YEL**

Supporting educational and social inclusion of young early leavers and those at risk of early leaving through mechanisms of orientation and tutorial action.

 **Germany**  **Portugal**  **Romania**

 **Spain**  **United Kingdom**

## **Tools**

 **Tools**

### **ePortfolio for Your Future (ePortfolio 4YF)**

*Student Computer Art Society/SCAS - LLP project*

The ePortfolio for Your Future (ePortfolio 4YF) project combines an innovative multimedia self-assessment tool ('self-discovery game') and an ePortfolio to prepare students to overcome the mismatch between education and work.

 **Austria**  **Bulgaria**  **Ireland**

 **Liechtenstein**

 **Tools**

### **LYCAM questionnaire**

*Lycée, ça m'intéresse*

The LYCAM (Lycée, ça m'intéresse) questionnaire, developed by the French Ministry of Education aims at helping practitioners to identify secondary school students' difficulties, motivations and personal views of school.

 **France**



✕ Tools

## Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee

This Catalogue of PES Youth Guarantee measures includes examples of PES employment counselling and guidance services for young people.

 EU level

✕ Tools

## Need for all Youngsters

*Brug for alle Unge, (BFAU)*

The Danish initiative 'Need for all Youngsters' included national initiatives to raise awareness of the educational system, in particular VET, amongst parents from ethnic minorities.

 Denmark

✕ Tools

## PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs

The PES handbook offers national examples of how the public employment services work in partnership with youth outreach workers and other key services to engage and support young people at risk of early leaving.

 EU level

✕ Tools

## ELGPN Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance

The guidelines have been developed by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). The main aim is to help improve the quality and efficacy of the career learning experience. It can also be used as a reference guide for national and EU policy-makers to identify dimensions of policy to be taken into account when deciding on lifelong guidance services.

 EU level

✕ Tools

## The Guiding Cities model

Guiding Cities aims to create a model of guidance to promote coherent policy and strategic planning and to respond to the complex needs in the fight against early school leaving.

 Greece  Italy  Romania

 Spain

✕ Tools

## DIDO - Dropping-in the dropouts toolkit

The DIDO toolkit contains practical tools aimed at preventing dropout in adult education.

 Belgium  Denmark  Finland

 Netherlands  Portugal


 Switzerland

## Publications

### Publications

#### **School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures and Alternative Learning Approaches to Reduce Early School Leaving**

This study shows that early warning systems usually cover more visible cognitive and behavioural indicators like students' grades, truancy or transgressive behaviour. This causes at-risk students who do not display such signs to remain undetected. The authors insist on the need to also monitor students' emotional well-being.

Download the report  [here](#).

 **Netherlands**  **Poland**

 **Portugal**  **Spain**  **Sweden**

 **United Kingdom**

### Publications

#### **Personal, vocational and occupational guidance in second chance schools**

*A comprehensive approach to support early leavers*

The article emphasises the critical role of personalised, vocational, and professional guidance in second-chance schools.

 **Spain**

## Quick wins

### Quick win

#### **Taster opportunities**

Taster opportunities – giving young people the chance to try out different vocational areas before they choose a VET programme – help to tackle misconceptions around VET.

 **France**  **Luxembourg**