

# Development of the Career Guidance System in Estonia

## Karjääriteenuste süsteemi arendamine



### 1 Description

**Timespan** 01.01.2008-31.12.2014

**Stage**

**OTHER**

This specific programme has finished, but its activities and mission are logically continued with a similar programme called "Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm 2014-2018" and "Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm 2016-2019", which aim to integrate study counselling and career guidance. The development of the "Career guidance counselling system" already started in 2005 with the support from ESF. The programme "Development of the Career Guidance System in Estonia 2008-2014" was its logical follow-up, improved and amended according to the feedback of the previous programme.

**Focus area**



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET



MATCHING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

### 2 Foundations

**Policy area**



GENERAL EDUCATION

This instrument was related to the Education and Labour Market policy and youth work policy, because the career guidance services were provided for a wide range of youth target groups, aged 7-26 (pupils of basic and general secondary education and vocational education). The career services were provided both by regional information and counselling centres and partners, and by pilot educational institutions. Furthermore, some pilot educational institutions became the mediators for career related information to adults as part of the pilot testing. Finally, intense training was provided to various career service related

specialists (e.g. career counsellors, coordinators, information specialists etc) and necessary support, guidance, study etc materials were created, updated and distributed.

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## **Policy goal**

To develop career guidance in the national system of education seeking to cope with the current and future skills mismatch. The general goal of the policy instrument was to provide easily accessible and high quality career guidance services and to guarantee that the development of the career guidance system in Estonia is systematic and sustainable.

The policy goal was related to lifelong learning and the development of human resources, specifically the goal was increased participation in lifelong learning according to the possibilities and needs of the population. The development of the Career Guidance System in Estonia contributes to the reduction of the future skills shortages through the following tasks: development of the national system of career guidance in the system of education; development of career education in general and vocational schools; development of the provision of career information and career counselling in regional information and counselling centres, including the creation of quality assurance system; development and introduction of ICT applications in guidance and counselling (questionnaires for choosing suitable occupations and the ability to recognise suitable professions etc); and strengthening of cooperation and information exchange within the institutional network in the fields of education, training, guidance, youth work and labour market in Estonia.

As the policy goal was to increase participation in lifelong learning, the instrument contributed to it by methodologically and systematically helping youth in their (career related) decision making process and making career studies and career planning part of their ordinary, everyday education. Furthermore, with the introduction of ICT applications, digital literacy was improved which nowadays is an essential part of lifelong learning. Institutional cooperation in the field of career guidance and counselling was strengthened through the creation of the Cooperation Council (Koostöökogu), which united various ministry representatives, youth organization representatives and employer federations etc. Also, during the programme period, various temporary working groups were assembled to solve relevant issues.

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## **Mismatch**

### **PART OF BROADER PROGRAMME, YET WITH EXPLICIT FOCUS**

It was part of the education and labour market and youth work policy with an explicit focus on the mismatch of supply and demand of skills in the labour market. It was also directly focused on seeking to improve the match between supply and demand of skills by improving and supporting informed career decisions for all target groups. Professional career guidance services help individuals to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, their interests etc, and thereby improve their

status on the labour market through proper training and retraining, in-service training and education, and so make better career decisions.

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**Aim of policy instrument**

ADDRESS SKILL SHORTAGES



UPSkill EMPLOYED ADULTS



MATCH SKILLS OF YOUNG GRADUATES



FACILITATE JOB/CAREER TRANSITIONS



BROADLY ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

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**Legal basis**

**MINISTERIAL ORDER**

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**Administrative level**

**NATIONAL**

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**Main responsible body**

Foundation Innove (SA Innove, rakendusüksus, the main implementation unit)  
Ministry of Education and Research, general education department (rakendusasutus, implementation institution)

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**Stakeholders**

TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)



CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



EMPLOYER FEDERATIONS



GOVERNMENT (CENTRAL & REGIONAL)



GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS



RESEARCH CENTRES AND UNIVERSITIES



## SOCIAL PARTNERS



## TRADE UNIONS

Accounting - finance centre and accountants in the Innove Foundation

Advising/consulting and cooperation - if needed and possible, other departments under the Innove Foundation, but also in the Ministry of Education and Research, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, employer federations, educational institutions, other social partners

Acting as observer - the Ministry of Education and Research

Implementing - Foundation Innove (rakendusüksus - implementation unit), regional Pathfinder centres (Rajaleidja keskused) and regional information and counselling centres, partners (all together 17, in each local government); the Ministry of Education and Research (rakendusasutus - implementation institution)

Monitoring, surveillance and control, auditing - the Ministry of Finance, its financial control department; foreign financial auditing commissioned by the European Commission for one separate control activity (did not directly involve the activities of the programme)

Programme, process and outcome evaluation - the Praxis Centre for Policy Studies Foundation, which is an independent, non-profit, civil initiative think tank

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### Funding

€4,855,000.23

95.79% of the total sum came from Structural Funds, including ESF funding (84.2%) and national Structural Funds (11.59%). The share of national funding and programme partners funding/contribution was (4.21%).

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## Intended beneficiaries

The target group was specified as the consumers of the career services, including pupils and youth, but also the general population of Estonia; but specifically (and actually) more emphasis was on graduates of vocational, basic and general secondary education. The target group also included the career service providers (career guidance counsellors, specialists, career coordinators, career teachers etc), as well as experts and other interested parties, who had an interest in the career services area (e.g. ministries and other organizations under their responsibility, representatives of local governments, career service providers and employers' representatives, federations etc). The employees of the Innove Foundation were also part of the target group and among the beneficiaries.

The youth were expected to benefit through better accessibility to career guidance services compared to the previous period, and also through improved and better informed career decisions. As a result, smart and better decisions will lead to better jobs and salaries and higher satisfaction with life. The career guidance counsellors, specialists, coordinators and teachers were expected to benefit through improved and high quality materials, including methodology guidance and support materials, enhanced and updated curricula, and also through active and comprehensive training opportunities (seminars, in-service training, information days, international training etc.) and through the creation of a comprehensive and systematic quality assurance system.

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## Processes

### Use of labour market intelligence



DESIGN TRAINING PROGRAMMES TO ACTIVATE UNEMPLOYED



INFORM DECISIONS ON COURSE FUNDING/PROVISION



INFORM CAREER-MAKING DECISIONS OF STUDENTS



INFORM AND TRAIN CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLORS



INFORM THE DESIGN OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS (NQFS)



DESIGN STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

The creation of the Cooperation Council of career services (Koostöökogu in Estonian), which was an organ that included various ministries (e.g. the Research and Education Ministry, the Social Ministry, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications), representatives of local governments (e.g. the Association of Estonian Cities), research and science institutions, target groups and various service providers and employers` and enterprises` federations (e.g. the Association of Estonian Career Counsellors, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund) and other social partners (e.g. the Estonian Youth Work Centre, the Association of Estonian Youth). The Cooperation Council assembled several times per year according to the work plan and needs of the career guidance system. The Cooperation Council gave various stakeholders the chance to cooperatively develop previously fragmented career services into a comprehensive system and approach. This in turn enabled to integrate and supplement various services.

In various activities the Unemployment Insurance Fund was actively involved, e.g. consulting and advising, giving feedback, distributing materials, sharing information.

In cooperation with the Estonian Qualifications Authority (SA Kutsekoda) many occupational/qualification standards were amended and updated. In addition many occupational descriptions and questionnaires were created and updated to test the awareness of the career service consumers and their ability to recognize various professions.

In cooperation with the Estonian Qualifications Authority (SA Kutsekoda) several career service and counselling related occupational/qualification standards were amended and updated, e.g. for career coordinators, career information specialists, career counsellors.

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**Financial schemes**

The (qualification) exam costs and the training costs (in-service training, re-training etc.) were reimbursed for participants.

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**Frequency of updates**

The progress and development of the instrument was measured annually. Furthermore, there were regular meetings for the Cooperation Council (Koostöökogu) and other working groups to exchange information. It was also emphasised that the online materials on the web page of Rajaleidja must be regularly updated (refreshed), as nowadays information ages relatively quickly.

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## Development

The approach has been adjusted during the implementation period of the policy instrument. For example, in the development of the methodology of career services and related materials, there were delays in vocational education, because a more specific approach was necessary than planned, and delays in general secondary education, because of development activities in national curricula. In 2013, the parliament passed the Vocational Educational Institutions Act that fundamentally changed the regulation of the vocational education system. In addition, a reform of the vocational education curricula and administration was carried out in 2013-2014. After that more emphasis was on outcome-based principles in the evaluation and establishing qualification criteria for types of vocational training, curricula etc. Among other things learning outcomes for career studies were formulated. As a consequence all types of vocational training curricula have a mandatory module for the acquisition of general skills, which also include learning outcomes related with career development and career studies. Due to these changes the programme and materials were updated accordingly (as it was not sensible to comprise materials based on the old law and old information).

Due to lack of programme resources to comprehensively target the youth population (aged 7-26), the emphasis was put more on graduates and less on the entire youth population.

During the implementation period some indicators were changed to better match them with the essence of the programme (e.g. the information and awareness raising seminars were dropped, and several satisfaction measures were added).

At the end of the programme, more emphasis was also put on the integration and cohesion of career services and study counselling services. The general view was that the integration of these services creates synergies. This idea is continued in the follow-up programme for 2014-2018 and 2016-2019.

During the programme various self-assessment questionnaires were adapted, e.g. to better match the qualities and characteristics of the individual with the opportunities (different jobs and their requirements) in the labour market.

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## **Barriers**

Regarding some programme activities, deadlines were missed due to higher workload and extra time needed to complete the activities.

Weaknesses mentioned in the 2013 evaluation report include: the sustainability of the programme and its heavy dependence on ESF funding; the deficit of career service providers; the lack of full time career specialists, which in turn relates to difficulties in maintaining their relevant competences; the lack of skills and knowledge; the lack of career guidance to employed and active adults; and low accessibility of career services in regional areas.

Another barrier during implementation has been the varying capability of regional information and counselling centres, and partners to provide high quality career services. Therefore, some partners and their personnel had to be replaced. At the start of the programme, there was much discussion about which regional organizations may launch the provision of programme services and when, and whether they are properly equipped.

Furthermore, during the implementation period, there were questions about when and what kind of expenditures are made, e.g. the need/obligation to spend the resources by the end of the year.

Barriers in financing the programme activities were related to lack of resources to comprehensively target the youth population (aged 7-26). Therefore, the emphasis was more on graduates and less on the entire youth population. According to career specialists and programme leaders the need for career services was greater than the actual provision.

Another important aspect mentioned in the 2013 evaluation report was that most of the programme funding has been spent on increasing accessibility, but the general principle for using ESF is to spend on activities and actions related to development.

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## **Success factors**

Before the programme was launched, a comprehensive applied study was commissioned to describe the weaknesses and strengths in the field of career services in Estonia. Thus, it was possible to take the results of the study into account and design the programme better to the needs of the target groups.

Cooperation between all stakeholders and the inclusion of various social partners (regular, planned meetings; specific work schedule), acceptance of the system and understanding about the necessity to create and participate in such a system. Keeping the stakeholders posted with all the relevant changes and developments (newsletters, meetings, information days etc).

The relatively low number of involved people, specialists who acted in close cooperation and actively shared information.

During the programme a comprehensive future concept for career services was developed, which was a good basis and argument for the creation of a follow-up programme in the future.

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## Monitoring

Progress was measured annually:

1st programme activity

- The number of updated methodology and information materials
- The number of created methodology and information materials
- The satisfaction of career specialists with the updated and created methodology and information materials

2nd programme activity

- Updated curricula for career service providers
- Organised information and awareness seminars (no longer in use since 2011)
- The share of people who successfully completed their training versus the share of people who participated in training
- The satisfaction of career specialists with the training provided in regional centres and partner educational institutions

3rd programme activity

- The number of regional areas where standardised career services are provided
  - The number of regional areas and centres where the provision of career services specifically to adults was tested
  - The number of pilot schools where career learning and studies are supported (no longer in use since 2011)
  - The number of schools that are involved and engaged in the career studies cooperation network
  - The number of visits on the web page Rajaleidja and increase compared to 2008 (the start of the programme)
  - The gradual increase in the number of visits on the web page Rajaleidja compared to the previous year
- 4th programme activity
- Quality assurance system (indicators)
  - The satisfaction of pupils in pilot schools with their career studies
  - The consumers satisfaction with the services provided by the regional information and counselling centres
- 5th programme activity
- Diversifying and increasing the number of members of the Cooperation Council (Koostöökogu)

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## Innovativeness

### SLIGHTLY INNOVATIVE

Due to comprehensive approach in the provision of career guidance services, actively engaging service providers and consumers. The approach is comprehensive because in addition to improving the accessibility of career services to target groups (mostly youth), the programme activities also involved improving the service quality through intense personnel training (also updating related qualifications and occupational standards) and the implementation of the quality assurance system.

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### Evidence of effectiveness

The impact and effectiveness are described in the ministerial order in the 2013 evaluation and in the 2015 final report in the following way:

- A positive impact on regional development, as better utilization of people's skills and knowledge enable them to reach and realise their maximum potential, thereby sustainable regional development is supported.

- A positive impact on the smart running of the country/state, as under the career guidance system, various studies and research are commissioned that support smart and sustainable decision-making. Also the Cooperation Council of career services (Koostöökogu) brings together relevant stakeholders who understand the importance of the career guidance system and support its development.

- The general impact of the instrument is considered as positive: the career services' methodology developments; the creation of support, guidance, study etc materials and a training system; the provision for career service providers (e.g. coordinators, counsellors); and the creation of a quality assurance system are all implemented systematically and based on actual needs.

- The assembled materials, leaflets are highly valued by regional partners and centres.

- Cooperation in the career guidance field has increased, although difficult to measure.

- The targets of most indicators were successfully achieved.

- In general, the use of programme resources was efficient, although there were not enough resources to target the whole youth population (aged 7-26), thus more emphasis was on graduates. The

benefits/beneficiaries have been as was expected. On the positive side, this programme has successfully managed to guide most of the resources to the activities directly related to the youth target population, i.e. to the provision of career services in regional centres and educational institutions to make career services more accessible to youth (and not to the main implementers of the programme). On the other hand, as the preliminary aim and scope of the programme was greater than the actual funding, it was not possible to comprehensively target the whole youth population. Therefore, the emphasis was more on graduates and less on the entire youth population. One weak result emphasised in the 2013 evaluation report is modest progress on enhancing accessibility to services and guaranteeing high awareness about the services among the general population (including adults). These expectations have not been met. But the main reason behind it is again lack of sufficient resources to cover large target groups. Nevertheless, the implementation of programme resources has been efficient according to the evaluation report. There have been no major unexpected benefits or costs. Although after the programme was finished, it was clear, that the preliminary scope and reach of the

programme was greater than the actual funding. Perhaps one potential unexpected benefit of the instrument may be the continuation, improvement and development of the programme activities and system in a follow-up programme. This was possible thanks to the development of the comprehensive future concept for career services in Estonia.

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**Engagement of stakeholders**

The continuous engagement was guaranteed with the ministerial order that specified the roles (obligations and rights) of all relevant parties and partners. The continuous engagement was also guaranteed with regular meetings and action plans for every year for all involved stakeholders. Furthermore, there were many information sharing activities, seminars and awareness raising events.

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**Transferability**

**EASILY TRANSFERABLE**

This programme would be most successfully transferred to another country if all relevant educational and labour market stakeholders are involved in the process, and the development of this system is of high priority (meaning ministries are also represented in the process).

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**Sustainability**

This specific programme (instrument) has finished, but its activities and mission are logically continued with a similar programme called "Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm 2014-2018" and "Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm 2016-2019", also with the support of ESF. The development of the "Career guidance counselling system" already started in 2005 with the support from ESF.

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