

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Norway

Please cite as: Cedefop (2020). *Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Norway*. CareersNet national records.
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices-norway>

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Introduction

As with many other countries, Norway took part in the international and comparative review of national career guidance services at the beginning of 2000. The main weakness of the system was the fragmented nature of current provision. The main strength was an emerging tradition of innovation through systematic trial and evaluation.

Since then, a national system for career guidance has emerged to reinforce the strengths and develop what OECD (2002) saw as weaknesses. The development has been based both on regional/local initiatives and/or from national initiatives. The different approaches will be presented in the following sections, and in the section for practice development.

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Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

Skills policy is on the top of the political agenda in Norway, and lifelong career guidance policy is attached to this tendency in several ways. The Government joined the OECD's skills Strategy project from 2012-14. The main recommendations from the OECD analysis (2014a & 2014b) were the development of a national skills policy strategy incorporating all stakeholders, the establishment of an action plan for continuous education and learning (LLL), and the building of a comprehensive career guidance system.

The Government followed up the recommendations with several actions: a national skills policy strategy signed by relevant stakeholders was presented in 2017. The strategy partners agreed to put in place a more comprehensive and coordinated system for lifelong career guidance and to develop further the regional career centres. It was considered

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urgent to raise the quality and the competences of career guidance practitioners, and to stress integration/immigration, Sami and senior support. As a part of the follow-up, the Government also appointed an expert committee to examine how to strengthen quality and access to career guidance, as well as to ensure a comprehensive lifelong system.

The National Unit for Lifelong Guidance was established in 2011 supporting cross-sectoral policy initiatives at national level. In addition, there is a National Coordinating Group (consisting of one or two representatives with management responsibility in the Directorate of Education, the Labour and Welfare Directorate, The Integration and Diversity Directorate, University Council and National School Board) and a National Forum for Career Guidance (consisting of Government representatives, NGOs and providers of career guidance services). In total, there are representatives of 28 different organisations/actors in the forum. Members are expected to bring the issues discussed in the forum forward to their members and bring back input and relevant questions. The aims of these two bodies are to contribute to the development of an integrated lifelong guidance system, to improve the quality of the career guidance services and to increase cooperation among stakeholders.

Partnerships for career guidance have been developed at a regional level in almost all counties. Regular partners include municipalities, PES (at regional level) and employer and employee organisations. The aims of the partnerships are like those of the national bodies but targeted at local/regional needs. One of the important roles of the partnerships is also to help the career professionals gain a better understanding of the labour market, to enhance collaboration among the career providers from education institutions, labour market and authorities. The development of the regional partnerships has been coordinated by the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (now named Skills Norway, the Directorate for Lifelong Learning in Norway).

There has been extensive widening and increase in cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination on groups at risk, especially the young and refugees. This focus implies coordination both on the political and at national and local administrative levels, which takes shape in collaboration on piloting projects. It also implies a stronger commitment between the Government and labour market organisations to cooperate on priority areas.

Sources

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Access to guidance

Provisions available in the education sector

Pupils in both secondary and upper secondary school have a legal right to guidance concerning education and vocational choices. Career guidance in the education system aims to raise awareness and support pupils in choosing an education and future vocation. It also contributes to the students' development of career competence in a lifelong perspective. The Education Act states that guidance should take place as a continuous process starting in lower secondary school, ending in upper secondary school. There is also a dedicated follow-up service in upper secondary school, which has a specific focus on NEETs. This service often cooperates with PES (see section [Guidance for NEET](#)).

Adults not associated with the public employment service

There are career centres in every county in Norway (the last one established in 2019),

giving adults access to free-of-charge professional career services. This service includes both one-to-one interviews, group-based sessions and web-based services. Users can get help with their CV or job application, but they can also attend courses provided for supporting the development of career management skills.

Labour market sector

The Parliament, having endorsed a white paper in 2016 urging changes needed in the PES administration (NAV), provides the basis for comprehensive improvements to labour market services. Stronger delegated authority and frame of actions to the local PES offices, including refined ICT development, are expected to provide better adapted services and benefits of better inclusion of residents, refugees, and services to employers.

All-age service

In 2019, a national system for digital all-age career guidance is being developed based on the recommendations in the [official national document](#) (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016). Skills Norway is leading the process of developing a digital career guidance service together with the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. To improve the population's access to neutral, quality-assured information and to increase access to professional career guidance, the committee recommends establishing an online career guidance service consisting of a website with information and self-help resources and online counselling (e-guidance). The chat service (e-guidance) will be used by the career counsellors at the career centres, and the aim is to develop a blended service where the residents of all ages can choose freely between face-to-face and digital career guidance.

Sources

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Quality assurance

The most important recommendations of the [Committee report](#) (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016) are to develop a cross sectoral quality framework for lifelong guidance, including a framework for career management skills, system for evidence gathering, competence standards for career practitioners, and ethical standards, to implement an internet/e-career guidance system and to strengthen the regional career centres.

This last recommendation can be seen in continuing regional reform, where the regional authorities have a more important role in planning, developing and coordinating the skills policy in their region. Presenting regional skills plans to improve the skills match within the region will be an important task. The regional career centres will have an important role in informing residents about regional skills needs.

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Career management skills

Career development/career learning is a compulsory programme in upper secondary school. The programme includes elements of career learning/career management skills. The curriculum was revised in 2015 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015) and the following three thematic areas were defined in the revised version: personal choice, focusing on developing an awareness of one's interests and opportunities and reflection regarding career choices; education and occupation, with a focus on acquiring knowledge and practical experience of upper secondary education and different professions; and work, aiming to strengthen students' knowledge of working life and a changing labour market. As part of the development of a national quality framework for career guidance (see section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#)), a lifelong framework for career management skills is included. The framework consists of 'areas for career management skills development'. It will be presented in autumn 2019.

A two-day career programme called Girls and leadership has been developed by Young Enterprise Norway with the aim of increasing the entrepreneurship skills, self-awareness, self-understanding and self-management skills of girls. The target group is involved in entrepreneurship-related activities, career training, and networking activities. Furthermore, Young Enterprise Norway develops job-shadowing activities for teenagers. The aim is to increase awareness of the careers of their relatives and of other members of the community. Self-awareness, self-understanding, and self-reflection are developed during the activities.

Evidence, monitoring and assessment

Data is gathered from the educational sector through surveys of pupils, teachers, school leaders, and school owners primarily. All questions do not necessarily refer to all groups of respondents; some are specifically for teachers, for instance, others for school owners, principals, some just for lower secondary, some only for upper secondary. Some are related to how the activity is organised, some on counsellor competence, some on resource/man hours, plus others. The surveys are carried out twice a year; questions about guidance are regularly included. Another closely related topic is school environment, which was featured in the most recent survey.

Regarding guidance, there are currently no other data gathering tools in the education sector. For instance, there is no ICT-based system for guidance counsellors to complete as part of their everyday job. However, there is regular publication of the results of the surveys, which are read by guidance counsellors and other education staff, in schools and higher education institutions. These publications are sought-after and integrated as inputs into practitioners' work, contributing to knowledge-based practices.

A system for evidence gathering is included in the national quality framework for career guidance (see section [Quality assurance](#)) that will be developed in 2018/19. More information will be forthcoming in November 2019.

Career information, ICT in guidance

The Future skills needs committee (*Kompetansebehovsutvalget*) has recently been established to provide information on Norway's future skills needs. It integrates 18 members (researchers, skills forecast experts, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of local and regional authorities, and the main social partner organisations) who shall meet for discussions, analysing, providing and disseminating targeted knowledge-based on available statistics, research and information on future skills needs.

The committee will analyse all the available relevant sources, research and analysis of skills

needs. The aim is to reach a common understanding of labour market developments and skills needs and to improve future skills forecasts. The committee has delivered two reports. The outcomes will form the basis for education and skills planning, at national and regional levels. The results from the Committee will also improve the quality of the career guidance, as it foresees a discussion on the production of LMI for guidance, through better knowledge of the labour market need of skills (see section [Access to guidance](#)).

The career choice programme (*Veivalg*) is a self-help tool developed by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration with the aim of providing access to self-assessment tools for analysing one's competences, skills, and interests and helping identify relevant occupation, as well as developing digital career plans. It encourages the development of self-awareness, self-understanding, self-management, and self-reflection.

Furthermore, www.vilbli.no and www.utdanning.no are two online tools which provide access to career, learning and training information. The latter will be integrated to the digital all age service mentioned in section Access to guidance.

Sources

Vilbli. <https://www.vilbli.no/nb/nb/no>

Utdanning. <https://utdanning.no/>

Training and qualifications

In Norway, the higher education sector is quite autonomous and normally the government does not directly influence the content of career practitioner education. There is indirect influence, nevertheless. When establishing the new master in career guidance programme in 2014 (delivered by University of South-East Norway and Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences), the government granted targeted funding for the programme, indicating the importance of upskilling of career guidance practitioners in Norway. The National Unit for Lifelong Guidance in Skills Norway was also invited to contribute to the initial phases of the development of the programme.

There is also a continuous informal dialogue initiated by the master programme between the programme and relevant actors/stakeholders, such as public employment services, school owners, municipalities, public administration directorates. This ensures that the programme is in line with recent developments both in career guidance and in society. This follows the Norwegian tradition of dialogue between diverse stakeholder organisations and the providers of the programmes, regarding their content. Some school guidance practitioners have access to special funding from the Directorate of Education to participate in further education and training in guidance. The new master programme offers open courses in career guidance, specifically aimed at career practitioners. Norway is also developing new teacher education at master level; career guidance is an optional course in some of the programmes.

There have been established programmes for internal continuous professional development (CPD) in different sectors. One example is the PUS, a guidance platform that has been developed with a variety of thematic modules.

This section is based on the [Norwegian country report](#) at ICCDPP 2017 symposium.

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Career guidance for school pupils

A compulsory programme in career development/career learning is given in secondary school (see section [Career management skills](#)). The programme includes elements of career learning/career management skills. Pupils in both secondary and upper secondary school have a legal right to necessary guidance concerning educational and vocational choices.

A two-day career programme called Girls and leadership has been developed by the Young Enterprise Norway with the aim of increasing the entrepreneurship skills, self-awareness, self-understanding and self-management skills of girls. The target group is involved in entrepreneurship-related activities, career trainings, and networking activities. Young Enterprise Norway also develops job-shadowing activities for teenagers. The aim is to increase the awareness on the careers of their relatives and of other members of the community. Self-awareness, self-understanding, self-reflection are developed during the activities.

The Youth Information Service provides access to career guidance and career information for young people under 20 years old.

Guidance for VET participants

Most VET programmes in Norway consist of two years of school-based education and training, followed by two years of apprenticeship in a training enterprise. The apprenticeship period gives the apprentice an opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge in a vocational field and prepare for the trade- or journeyman's exams. Pupils in VET have a legal right to necessary guidance on educational and vocational choices. Included in the curriculum is a subject called 'vocational in-depth programme' (*Yrkesfaglig fordypning*). The aim of the subject is to introduce students to 'the working life', so it can be perceived as a career learning program. The subject is developed in cooperation with local/regional enterprises (Information accessed from [Utdanningsdirektoratet](#)).

The project Innovation camps aims at developing entrepreneurial skills, creativity and innovative thinking. It is implemented across Europe by [Ja-Ye branches](#), and involves students in a 24-hour intensive workshop where their main task is to solve a real business challenge. Innovation camps bring together students from general and vocational education, and from universities. Students work in groups of three to six and focus on finding a solution for a business challenge or for a social problem. Innovation camps start with a brainstorming session where participants get to know each other and learn how to harmonise and work as a team; it continues with the presentation of the challenge. The group has 24 hours to come up with a creative solution which will be assessed by a jury comprising representatives from companies, schools, public organisations and media.

Participating in innovation camps helps students develop teamwork skills, creative thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. 390 vocational schools and 7800 vocational school students (600/per country) from Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey have been involved in the project. Each school involves a teacher and a business volunteer.

Please see the description of VET system in Norway [here](#).

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Guidance for higher education students

Students in higher education have no established legal entitlement to career guidance but several universities have set up career centres as part of their strategy. Some have also established online services. For example, the Profråd career service is an online counselling tool developed by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) with the aim of helping students to make informed decisions about their education and professional path, by providing access to online activities focused on self-understanding, self-knowledge, and self-awareness.

Another area of development has been entrepreneurship. The Norwegian entrepreneurship programme (*Gründerskolen*) aims to develop entrepreneurial skills by involving students in start-up programmes and internships. The Youth Information Service provides access to career guidance and career information for young people under 20 years old.

Guidance for adult learners

Adult learners can access guidance through the regional career centres. From 2019, they also have access to the all-age digital career guidance service (see section [Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders](#)).

Guidance for the employed

Some major companies offer career guidance as a service for their employees. These employees also have the same access to guidance as other adult learners (see section [Guidance for adult learners](#)).

Guidance for unemployed adults

The public employment service has increased its focus on ensuring that the unemployed and people outside the labour market due to health problems are given the opportunity to develop career competences during the different programmes they attend. The [national skills strategy](#) states that access to career guidance may promote faster transition to work for the unemployed, or contribute to keeping people in employment. Supporting effective choices may be of significant socioeconomic benefit in situations of unemployment and reorganisation, but also when choosing education or profession. It is necessary to build up a coherent system for career guidance in all regions in order to meet these requirements.

NAV provides several services to the registered unemployed such as status clarification, wage subsidies and work-oriented health care. Since 1st January 2017, recipients are obliged to participate in activation measures which may include low-threshold (e.g. basic skills development), skills development/qualifying measures and work-oriented activities for people with work ability (e.g. support to job search). NAV follows up the registered unemployed to provide flexible and tailored support at any given point of the activation process.

To prevent dropout from working life deriving from poor basic skills, the Government launched CompetencePlus (*Kompetansepluss*), a programme aimed at developing basic competence for working life, in 2006. The overall aim is to give adults the opportunity to acquire the basic skills they need to keep up with the demands of and changes in modern working life and civil society, and to encourage them to achieve further educational goals.

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Guidance for older adults

Older residents have access to free career guidance service at the regional career guidance centres, same as those for adults. In the national skills strategy it is said that: *'Career guidance may help seniors meet changing skills demands in the labour market in a better way. It can promote their mobility, so they can remain longer in employment'*.

Sources

Ministry of Education and Research (2017). *Norwegian Strategy for Skills Policy 2017-2021*. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/norwegian-strategy-for-skills-policy-2017---2021/id2527271/>

Guidance for NEET

In Norway, there are increasing concerns for the growing number of young people who are neither in education nor employment who are simultaneously struggling with mental health issues. These are challenges that cut across different welfare policy areas. In its monitoring of young people who are on the verge of dropping out of upper secondary school, Norway engages its follow-up service (legislated in the Education act), which has specific responsibility for this group.

People who are not registered in the education or labour system are covered by the outreach service, run by the county authorities (municipalities). The outreach service conducts preventive and outreach social work among young people. It offers advice and advocacy in dealing with issues related to work, school, drugs, housing or similar. The service seeks out young people who need support or assistance, but who receive inadequate or no help from other support institutions. Contacts are made in city centres, shopping centres, train stations, traffic hubs, petrol stations, fast food restaurants or wherever young people hang out. The service is regionally based and cooperates with youth clubs and schools, child welfare services and school health services, health centres for young people and their families, and the police.

The 0-24 cooperation focuses on early intervention, close individual follow-up and good interdisciplinary cooperation across the health, labour and education sectors for vulnerable people between 0 and 24 years of age. The goal of the cooperation is to increase the number of learners who complete upper secondary education and engage in the labour market.

The Youth guarantee (*ungdomsgaranti*) is one important policy which ensures that access to labour market measures is granted to NEETs under the age of 20. For unemployed young people in the age group 20-24, the guarantee means that an activity plan (measures,

means of employment, welfare management and services) is prepared within one month of NAV's decision that labour-oriented assistance is required.

Systematic cooperation between municipality and county municipality about close follow-up of poorly performing students has been developed. Cooperation between the county municipality and NAV has also been improved and common goals for greater completion of upper secondary school has been set up. For instance, the Follow-up Service (FuS) was developed to help with the reintegration of NEETs in education, training and/or work programmes. It was the result of good cooperation between schools and PES.

Guidance for immigrants

In May 2016 the Norwegian government launched a [white paper](#) on integration policy (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2016). The paper is based on the migration situation in Europe and Norway in 2015 and 2016. It outlines how Norway's integration policy and measures should be organised to ensure that newly arrived immigrants with refugee backgrounds enter the labour market or start education without delay and acquire a permanent connection to the labour market. In this white paper, the government decided to establish a system encompassing the mapping of the individual's skills and qualifications in the reception phase and the provision of careers advice in the asylum centre, based on the skills profiling.

Five new integration reception centres were established in Norway (see the practice section of the above mentioned white paper for the experiences so far with guidance in reception centres). These centres were based on a model of a full-time qualifications programme that should assist the refugees to integrate faster. The purpose was to achieve a more efficient transition towards working life through early intervention and cooperation between public agencies. Norwegian courses, mapping of skills, career guidance, and better knowledge about Norwegian society should lead to a more comprehensive and tailored plan that would follow the refugees further over to the Introduction programme. Skills Norway was leading the work on establishing career guidance in the integration reception centres, directed by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The regional career centres were assigned to implement and develop methods of career guidance that fitted the refugees.

Sources

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Guidance for other groups

Career guidance in correctional service

Skills Norway conducted in June 2016 a digital survey among guidance practitioners in prison. The survey was provided to 53 guidance practitioners and had 34 respondents. The intention was to investigate and increase the evidence base about career guidance as a part of the Norwegian correctional service. The need for a stronger evidence base was recommended in the Official Norwegian report (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016) [Career guidance for the individual and the society](#). The survey analysed the role of the guidance practitioner (tasks, education and experience); the service provision; cooperation with others; and skills needs of practitioners. Based on the findings from the survey, five recommendations were proposed:

- a. increased access to guidance is needed, especially for those in prison for short periods,

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newly arrived immigrants and people in special departments. The survey also reveals a difference in the service across prisons. For groups with an increased need for service, the report recommended stronger cooperation with the regional career centres, available in almost every county in Norway. More specifically, greater involvement, both as providers of individual guidance and different group-based services, is suggested;

- b. more time to provide personal guidance. Respondents reported that the combination of bureaucracy (e.g. documentation) and limited resources are the main challenges to providing professional guidance services. It was recommended increased cooperation with regional career centres. It was also recommended to analyse the content of the role as guidance practitioner in prison, to see if changes can be made some that allow more time for guidance provision;
- c. explore the potential for more interdisciplinary and cross sectoral cooperation. The survey reveals cooperation between guidance practitioners and different actors (e.g. on health issues, public employment service, education). The authors refer to some evidence and policy recommendations regarding the need for different interdisciplinary effort to bring 'outsiders' back into society. Besides the potential role for career centres as providers of individual or group-based guidance, they also point to the possibility of the centres as resources in skills development among practitioners in prison;
- d. a need for further skills development. The survey reports a need for skills development in different areas (e.g. tools, methods adjusted for the target group). For some, informal training, as in a network of guidance practitioners in the same position, is requested more than formal training. The authors recommend that the department responsible for the correctional service should establish these kinds of arena for knowledge sharing, reflection and knowledge creation;
- e. further development of research-based knowledge. Following the overall recommendations in the Official Norwegian report (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016) *Career guidance for the individual and the society*, on the need for a stronger evidence base, a recommendation is made for further research in this area. They suggest broadening of the group of respondents, possibly including the public employment service and others involved in the correctional service.

Translated into English by Associate Professor Erik Hagaseth Haug from Byholt, V., Bakke, G.E. Bakke & Ianke, P. (2017) *Karriereveiledning i kriminalomsorgen* [Career Guidance in Correctional Service] Oslo: Skills Norway.

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Coronavirus Update

As in many other countries, the turn into digital guidance services of many kinds are the main response from the guidance field. At a national level, [Skills Norway](#) has developed a

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digital portal for sharing of good resources and methods. For instance, the Public Employment Service has developed a [digital roadmap](#) with targeted "information roads" based on individuals' situation during the crisis (e.g. "I am on forced leave" or "I have to stay home and do home schooling"). Furthermore, they have automated the [process of applying for unemployment benefits](#) given the increased number of people on forced leave. Regarding future development, the crisis has "pushed forward" the launch of a national digital career service developed by Skills Norway. In addition, the government has announced the need for more short term, module-based learning options at different levels targeted for people at forced leave during the crisis.

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