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**TOWARDS EU STANDARDS FOR
MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF
LIFELONG GUIDANCE SYSTEMS AND
SERVICES (VOL. III)**

The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

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Foreword

With the right policies in place, lifelong guidance provision contributes to a range of public policy goals and outcomes in the social and economic fields, including social and economic integration. It promotes active participation and engagement with learning lifelong and in the world of work, facilitating people's employability, job retention, and transitions. It contributes to economic development of society through reinforcing skills development, work performance and motivation of workers, as well as reducing skills mismatches through promotion of sustainable and meaningful careers.

Publicly funded lifelong guidance services exist to serve the needs of adults through a range of career development activities and products. This is a shared responsibility: multiple stakeholders participate in the development of policies and systems for lifelong guidance, requiring coordination of services across different ministries and levels of administration. Resources are pooled to achieve better results and programmes tend to be adapted at sector and regional level across education, training, and the labour market. Due to the complex governance, both public investment and policy outcomes are difficult to monitor and, therefore, to be analysed in terms of cost effectiveness.

This report is part of Cedefop work towards European standards for monitoring and evaluation of lifelong guidance systems and services, aimed at generating better understanding of the costs of publicly financed measures in career development and career guidance for adults. The nature of this third report is explorative and highlights the limitations of the sources reviewed and the difficulties in exploring data on costs related to career development activities. Nevertheless, a better information base is a first necessary step in developing common EU standards for national (regional or organisational) quality frameworks for lifelong guidance, designed to achieve an integrated vision of the outcomes of career guidance.

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Executive summary

Aim, scope and limitations

This report is the third volume of a Cedefop study on developing EU standards for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) lifelong guidance systems and services, expanding the evidence base on outcomes and impacts of career development support. The report deals mainly with input, and, to some degree, output elements ⁽¹⁾; it aims at generating better understanding of the costs of publicly financed measures involving career development and career guidance for adults and the methodologies for estimating costs in measures supporting adult career development. The report is another step in Cedefop's effort in moving towards common understanding about standards for lifelong guidance in the EU, for the young and adults. It involves collecting information on data and suitable methodological approaches used for monitoring and evaluation in the wider field, including potential for innovation and development. Other unexpected findings, challenges and lessons learned during the study also add to its value. Although it focuses on career development measures for adults, the content of the report and other volumes can also benefit other sectors serving the young, such as in school guidance services.

In a context in which investment in the career development and learning activities of adults is increasingly diversified, and support for learning requires strong coordination between ministries and different levels of administration and policies, as well as between services, understanding the cost of career related activities is fundamental; it can improve career guidance efficiency and, especially, its effectiveness, leading to individual, organisational, social or other outcomes according to agreed aims. Understanding costs associated with lifelong guidance activities is a necessary element in moving towards adequate methodologies and systems for monitoring and evaluation in lifelong guidance across sectors (education, training, employment, and wider labour market) and at different levels for different target user groups. Understanding cost, an input element, together with well contextualised information on output (e.g. number of service users), outcome and impact will enable the creation of robust quantitative indicators: these can then be used in frameworks for quality assurance and

⁽¹⁾ How output is defined depends on the context and aim of the exercise. Volume II (Cedefop, 2022) in this series uses output to mean indicators used to monitor the short-term immediate performance of a measure. They can be related to client satisfaction and the characteristics or numbers of participants.

continuous improvement and in connection with agreed expected outcomes and results of career guidance experiences, established through cooperation and collaboration of key actors and stakeholders in lifelong guidance.

The career development measures reviewed include career guidance activities and those that are connected, with the aim to support career development of adults (over 18 years). As career development tools and practices can be increasingly designed to service multiple age groups, some measures also cover young people under 18, but the main focus here is on provisions that cover adults. In addition to those measures and activities dedicated specifically to career guidance including career related advice and career counselling, activities included the integration of:

- (a) outreach and information to prepare individuals for vocational training, learning activities, and the labour market;
- (b) assessment and audits of skills and career interests;
- (c) validation of non-formal and informal learning services;
- (d) basic skills training and motivational training programmes to prepare adults in VET or other programmes;
- (e) short-term work experience, career sampling, or job shadowing.

Cedefop, including this study and its associated volumes (Cedefop et al. 2022, Cedefop, 2023), adopts the same broad understanding of lifelong guidance and the operation of its providers distributed throughout its system. Such lifelong guidance is seen as a continuous process that enables citizens, at any age and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used (Council of the European Union, 2008). It covers a range of individual and collective career guidance related activities, resources and tools, and diverse providers and settings, related to information-provision, career counselling, competence and skills assessment, support and acquisition of decision-making and career management skills. These are intended to provide access to and support for individual decision-making on careers and career development, lifelong, which includes learning and education, employment opportunities, labour market integration and other life decisions affecting careers.

The report is explorative and precise comparisons between costs within and between countries and measures cannot be considered reliable, although commonalities can be discussed. The report highlights the limitations of the sources reviewed and the difficulties in obtaining and exploring data on costs related to career development activities. There are important limitations in the

availability and reliability of the data identified. Measures vary in terms of the type of activities they include and the comprehensiveness of their offer. They also differ in several respects: the intensity and length of support they offer; the type of career guidance activities involved; the extent to which they are universal measures or measures that target specific demographic target user groups; and their governance and funding arrangements. Hence the figures presented in this report need to be understood as tentative and within the context of their calculations.

Approach and type of measures

This report is primarily based on analysis of data on costs gathered at national level in five case study countries (Belgium-Flanders, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Austria) on career guidance and career counselling activities and those that are integrated, aiming to support adult career development. Case study countries and measures for in-depth research were selected after a review of country practices and national data, including administrative information as well as evaluation/assessment reports and studies. From a total of 456 ⁽²⁾ measures reviewed across the EU Member States, a total of 144 were identified as integrating career guidance and guidance counselling and other related activities included in the scope of the study, many of which can be considered active labour market measures. Of these, 24 measures were selected due to their data availability potential on cost. However, we were unable to obtain proper data to estimate cost in four of the measures, so the report presents cost estimation in 20 measures in five countries. The data do not take into consideration developments due to COVID.

The data collection process involved review of documentation about the measures and collection of information through interviews with key informants directly involved in them in the first half of 2020. The measures are referred to in the report using standard labelling, including the country code and a number. The list of measures can be found in Section 2.1, Table 5.

⁽²⁾ The measures come from a documentary review of country practices, national data, including administrative information, available evaluation/assessment reports and studies. This also entailed a follow up of the initial literature review sources – including a review of country records in [Cedefop's Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices](#) (Cedefop, 2020; 2021); DG Employment's Labour market policy statistics and country reports (European Commission, 2018a, 2018b); and the national reports of the Independent national experts network in adult education and adult skills commissioned by DG Employment.

Based on the scope of activities each measure includes, it was possible to create a simple typology of measures that allows us to explore cost in a more meaningful way. All measures cover Type 1 elements: either the provision of information or career guidance and advice to varying degrees, some with initial outreach. Activities in Type 2 integrate provision of skills assessment and/or validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL); activities in Type 3 integrate short-work experiences and motivational or basic training. The measures integrating the most comprehensive offer of activities are in Type 4.

Table 1. **Typology of measures**

| Type | Measures |
|---|---|
| Type 1: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance | AT2, AT4, EE1, EE2, EE3, LT3, LT6 |
| Type 2: 1 + skills assessments and/or VNFIL | AT3, BE3 |
| Type 3: 2 + short work experience <u>or</u> motivational or basic training | AT1*, AT5, BE1, BE2, EE4, EE5, FR1, FR2, FR3, LT2, LT4, LT5 |
| Type 4: 2 + short work experience <u>and</u> motivational or basic training | EE6, LT1, FR4 |

*AT1 has no skills audit or VNFIL activity.

Source: Cedefop.

Available information





The research sought to identify data on total costs, staff costs, other costs, and number of participants for each measure. The data collected enabled the estimation of the total costs of 18 out of 20 measures first selected, but accuracy and comparability of the data are limited. Data on staff costs and other costs was available for around one third of the measures. Of the 20 measures for which cost data are available, information on total 'other costs' (e.g. building-related cost, stationery, recruitment expenditure or staff training) is unknown for 14 measures and information on total 'staff costs' is unknown for 12 measures. The costs covered under 'other costs' vary significantly across measures, though it was possible in some cases to identify certain costs that are included in the overall cost of the measures. This provides some indication on what is included in total costs or not, but those such as property costs, building use, other service-related expenditure and overhead costs are not consistently included in total cost calculations. Staff costs are generally the bulk of expenditure. The data collected

do not allow for a breakdown of what these staff costs exactly relate to; it is possible to assume they may be exclusively for wages.

Table 2 below summarises the data collected and subsequently reviewed for the analysis. For some measures (in green in the table: EE1, EE2, FR2 and LT2) data were directly available. For most measures (in orange in the table) unit cost could be calculated based on partial information.

Table 2. **Summary of data availability on cost**

| | Measure 1 | Measure 2 | Measure 3 | Measure 4 | Measure 5 | Measure 6 |
|----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| AT | AT1 | AT2 | AT3 | AT4(*) | AT5 | |
| BE | BE1 | BE2 | BE3 | | | |
| EE | EE1 | EE2 | EE3 | EE4 | EE5 | EE6 |
| FR | FR1 | FR2 | FR3 | FR4 | | |
| LT | LT1 | LT2 | LT3 | LT4 | LT5 | LT6 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
|  | The data are available directly or allow for cost estimation. |  | Only partial data available. |  | Insufficient data to estimate costs. |  | No additional measures mapped for the country. |
|---|---|---|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|

(*) Data collected for one region only.

Source: Cedefop.

Relevant data were not available for four measures (AT3, FR3, LT4, LT5). There are several reasons for gaps in the data.

- Certain measures include activities inside and outside the scope of this study and it has not been possible to determine the share of costs dedicated to activities under the scope of the study. For example, measure FR3 (PIC) includes various career guidance measures focused on professional training of clients. For LT4 (professional rehabilitation), the measure entails vocational training. In the case of LT4, this activity is outside the scope of the study yet covered in the cost of the measure.
- Certain measures include activities that are outsourced to external service providers, making accurate cost calculations close to impossible. This has been identified in the case of LT4.
- Informants were not able to provide estimations of the time spent by staff on the activities under the scope of the study or the proportion of staff time allocated to them. This applies to LT5 (EURES) and AT3 (individual action

plans). In the case of AT3, certain activities within the measure (e.g. devising training plans and their follow-up) are interlaced with other roles and responsibilities assigned to PES employment counsellors and it is not possible to differentiate between costs and resources.

- (d) The cost of all PES provision is calculated as a whole and not disaggregated for individual measures. This applies to FR3.

Unit cost estimation

Table 3 presents the unit cost per participant (or participation) and level of intensity and support according to measure type. The method used to calculate the unit cost differed, depending on the availability of data. In most cases the unit cost refers to cost per participant, dividing total cost by number of participants. The total cost is sometimes budget and sometimes actual cost, depending on what was available. In some cases, the measure had a budget associated per individual (AT4 and BE1). The figures in the table need to be contextualised with the specific cost categories and information that it was possible to collect for each measure. This is provided in Chapter 4 and Annex 1.

Table 3. **Unit cost and level of intensity by measures**

| Group/Measure | Unit costs | Level of intensity and length of support |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Type 1: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance | | |
| AT2 | INA | Low |
| AT4 | EUR 343 | Medium-high |
| EE1 | EUR 27 | Medium-high |
| EE2 | EUR 27 | Medium-high |
| EE3 | EUR 223 | High |
| LT3 | INA | Low |
| LT6 | EUR 18 | Low-medium |
| Type 2: Type 1 + skills assessments and/or VNFIL | | |
| BE3 | EUR 150 to EUR 1 195 (*) | High |
| Type 3: Type 2 + work experience <u>or</u> training | | |
| AT1 | EUR 620 | High |
| AT5 | EUR 1 874 | High |
| BE1 | EUR 550 | Medium-high |

| Group/Measure | Unit costs | Level of intensity and length of support |
|---|------------|--|
| BE2 | EUR 283 | High |
| EE4 | EUR 1 193 | High |
| EE5 | EUR 83 | High |
| FR1 | INA | Medium-high |
| FR2 | EUR 649 | Medium-high |
| LT2 | EUR 392 | High |
| Type 4: Type 3 + work experience <u>and</u> training | | |
| EE6 | EUR 211 | High |
| FR4 | EUR 655 | Medium-high |
| LT1 | EUR 1 688 | High |

(*) EUR 150 (guidance phase) to EUR 820 or EUR 1,195 (leading to certification)

Source: Cedefop.

Conclusions

The research in this report showed that obtaining and estimating adequate cost data on career guidance related activities poses many challenges not easy to overcome. It is possible to conclude that the data gathered and analysed show that cost structures are not generally comparable across the measures reviewed. Total costs cannot be directly compared between measures, within or across countries as they refer to measures with different characteristics and activities, different numbers of participants (or participations) and cover different time periods. For similar reasons, data on staff costs and other costs (including career practitioner/staff training) cannot be compared; such data were available for around one third of the measures.

Our analysis has focused on the unit costs, considering total cost in relation to number of participants and noting differences in data availability for different countries, as well as other country background factors. It has been possible to estimate the cost per participant (or participation) for 17 measures of the 20 with data on cost, in the specific context of the study and without considering the aims of the measure or individual or other outcomes.

Although there are some indications that more intensive and longer measures were costlier in economic terms, as inputs to the career guidance process, differences are not consistent and limitations on data availability make comparison challenging. It is also not possible to draw meaningful conclusions on the added value of services for different beneficiaries, without examining data

on outcomes for individuals, improvement of career guidance provisions, and impacts of policies, at different levels. It was also not possible to prove that unit costs would be higher in measures targeting vulnerable demographic groups, particularly if any cost savings were calculated in relation to their beneficial outcomes (e.g. less time collecting unemployment benefits, better engagement in education and training, increased career readiness, and employability, increased wellbeing). While it can be observed that measures that include a comprehensive set of activities and provide more intensive guidance and support tend to have higher unit costs than those that are less comprehensive and intensive, this is not always consistent and varies by measure type; data are needed on the aims of the measures and expected outcomes, in relation to cost savings. Data limitations and differences in cost composition might be the reason for the different unit costs. Measures with a low number of integrated activities (only provision of information, advice and/or career guidance) seem to have lower costs, as could be expected. However, there are no clear patterns.

In general terms, in the 20 measures reviewed, it is difficult to explain the broad divergences in unit costs between measure types and level of intensity: cost might differ considerably despite a measure being similar in size, scope and structure. More in-depth research is needed to understand these divergences.

The report also explored funding mechanisms. The most common is a combination of lump-sum for full operational costs of service provider and purpose/measure-specific funding; this is widely used across all measures in Estonia and most measures in France. A performance-based funding mechanism applies to LT3 only. In terms of sustainability, 12 of the 20 measures involve annual budgets.

Some commonalities can be identified in terms of the stakeholders involved. Measures that are outsourced to a range of service providers tend to have high unit costs. A key issue related to outsourcing of the measure / activities is that this appears to have led to a type of service fragmentation in terms of cost accounting. Such fragmentation means that staff and other costs are collected by individual providers and not always captured in a centralised management system that can help achieve an overall view on financial investment. The challenge of trying to determine real unit costs of such services is further complicated by the high level of cross-subsidisation of lifelong guidance services and related career services, rigid budget headlines that do not correspond to the overall objectives of the measures, and resistance from institutions to providing detailed data on costs.

Understanding costs and estimating the unit cost of career guidance with activities integrated to support adult career development is important; it can help

build suitable systematic approaches for monitoring and evaluation in the context of expected outcomes and impacts agreed upon with stakeholders. These inputs to the career guidance process can be used in frameworks for longer-term quality assurance and continuous improvements, together with required data on processes, outcomes and impacts, to increase efficiency and, particularly, effectiveness, across lifelong guidance systems. There are issues identified related to data limitations and difficulties associated with identifying a link between unit costs and outputs (participation in a measure or activities), in addition to variations in terms of the type, consistency and quality of career support offered. Volume I (Cedefop et al., 2022) and Volume II (Cedefop, 2023), which did not address cost directly other than in relation to attempting to identify indicators which require data on costs and outputs, has shown that there is a lack of consistent approaches to evaluating and monitoring input, outputs, processes, outcomes and impact; more research, such as into appropriate counterfactual measurements or equivalent methods, are needed. One drawback is that this faces challenges as discussed in Cedefop et al. (2022) by Percy and Hughes (2022), who underline the ethical considerations in applying control groups in person-centred services such as career guidance, and the complexity of capturing career guidance processes due to other intervening factors and influences affecting outcomes. Drawing definitive conclusions about effectiveness of a measure relates to more than individual or other outcomes, as we need to see career guidance in a wider context. Many activities and measures can be integrated with career guidance and this varies depending on the needs of clients and their readiness to make use of self-help services, such as in terms of employability skills and life situation, and available information, as well as the quality of such provisions.

Volume III of this work has further shown that variations in the methodological approaches to determine unit costs and data limitations contribute to the difficulties associated with identifying links between unit costs and outcomes; this hampers the evidence base required for better targeting of financial and other investments, for example for improving service customisation, developing client-friendly monitoring tools or digital infrastructure, or training career practitioners. In addition to challenges in obtaining adequate and comparable data, in many instances, costs are not clearly differentiated, and it is not possible to identify the specific cost of individual activities. This is not surprising, however, as career guidance involves an integrative approach in order to tailor to client needs, and services are often embedded in other systems or institutional frameworks. The costs included (or not) to compute total cost might

also differ considerably, making it complicated to establish a proper understanding of overall cost and efficiency.

There is a need to explore further the possible ways of making costs more transparent. Better data collection on a continuous basis will create more robust evidence that, in turn, may facilitate system improvements and better understanding of intermediate and longer-term effects of career interventions. It is important, however, that this evidence is built in consultation with stakeholders, including practitioners as well as researchers and experts in the field, and uses existing national or other quality frameworks addressing standards for career guidance that includes for professional competences. Building consensus on what components are (or not) included in total cost and finding common ways of accounting for costs across countries in different measures would make peer learning possible at European level.

Understanding costs associated with lifelong guidance activities will be an important aspect of moving towards common methodological standards and systems for monitoring and evaluation. Measures on cost, combined with well contextualised information on process, output, outcome and impact, will provide an opportunity to create frameworks and robust data and indicators for quality assurance for continuous improvement of lifelong guidance provisions adapted to the different target user groups.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

1.1. Aims and scope

This report is the third volume of a Cedefop study on developing EU standards for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) lifelong guidance systems and services, including sharing methodological approaches, and expanding the evidence base on outcomes and impacts of career development support. The report aims at generating better understanding of the costs of publicly financed measures supporting career development and career guidance for adults: financial investment forms an important type of input element in the career guidance and career support processes, and can influence the quality of provisions and the outcomes for individuals and for society. The report is another step in Cedefop's effort in moving towards a common understanding of the standards for monitoring and evaluation.

In a context in which investment in the career development and learning activities of adults is increasingly diversified, and support for learning requires strong coordination between ministries, policies, and levels of administration, and between services, understanding the cost of career related activities is fundamental to improving career guidance efficiency and effectiveness. Quality in terms of the career guidance processes is also critical. An increase in the transparency and understanding of costs associated with labour market, education and training policies, with lifelong guidance as a bridge between these sectors, can facilitate peer learning between member states. With this, it will be possible to move towards a model of improved cooperation and understanding each other's' investment patterns and innovative solutions, and how this may affect outcomes at different levels.

This report sought to identify data on total costs, staff costs (e.g. total number of staff, their average salary, and those specifically dedicated to the activities under the scope of the study), and other costs (e.g. property costs, building use, overhead costs, and training of practitioners). In order to consider unit cost, data on the number of participants for each measure as well as other output data were explored to understand cost relative to the size of the activity. However, due to data limitations, unit cost was only calculated using number of participants (or participation) per measure.

The career development measures reviewed include career guidance activities and those that are connected, which aim to support career development

of adults (over 18 years). As career development tools and practices can increasingly be designed to service multiple age groups, some measures also cover young people under 18, but the focus here is on provisions that cover adults. In addition to those measures and activities dedicated specifically to career guidance, including career related advice and career counselling, activities included the integration of:

- (a) outreach and information to prepare individuals for vocational training, learning activities, and the labour market;
- (b) assessment and audits of skills and career interests;
- (c) validation of non-formal and informal learning services;
- (d) basic skills training and motivational training programmes to prepare adults in VET or other programmes;
- (e) short-term work experience, career sampling, or job shadowing.

Cedefop, including in this study and its associated volumes (Cedefop et al. 2022, Cedefop, 2023), adopts the same broad understanding of lifelong guidance and the operation of its providers distributed throughout its system. In this way, lifelong guidance is seen as a continuous process that enables citizens, at any age and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used (Council of the European Union, 2008). Lifelong guidance covers a range of individual and collective career guidance related activities, resources and tools, and diverse providers and settings, related to information-provision, career counselling, competence and skills assessment, support and acquisition of decision-making and career management skills. These are aimed at providing access to and support for individual decision-making on careers and career development, lifelong, which includes learning and education, employment opportunities, labour market integration and other life decisions affecting careers. Career guidance initiatives and activities anchored with the labour market sector, even if they facilitate upskilling or participation in adult learning, can also be considered as active labour market measures linked to active labour market policy (ALMP).

The focus is on exploring the cost of services and measures aimed at supporting the career development and learning activities of adults; more specifically, the extent to which it is possible to estimate public spending on integrated individual learning and career support measures. This is, however, not enough to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of measures or effects on participants, since data on processes and outcomes, or impact, is needed to draw any such conclusions.

The report is mainly explorative and highlights the limitations of the empirical sources reviewed and the difficulties in obtaining and exploring data on costs related to career development activities. But it also contributes to the knowledge base on the subject area and paves the way for Cedefop's next work on monitoring and evaluation in lifelong guidance.

1.2. Approach and method

This report is primarily based on an analysis of the data on costs gathered at national level in five case study countries (Belgium-Flanders, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Austria) on selected career guidance and career counselling activities and integrated activities; such activities aim to support the career development of adults and lead to positive results. Case study countries and measures for in-depth research were selected after a documentary review of country practices, national data, including administrative information, available evaluation/assessment reports and studies. This also entailed a follow-up of the initial literature review sources: these included a review of country records in Cedefop's Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices (Cedefop, 2020; 2021); DG Employment's Labour market policy statistics and country reports (European Commission, 2018a, 2018b); and the national reports of the Independent national experts network in adult education and adult skills commissioned by DG Employment.

From a total of 456 policy measures reviewed across the EU Member States, 144 were identified as measures integrating career guidance and guidance counselling and other related activities included in the scope of the study, many of which can be considered active labour market measures. Of these, after deciding which countries would be the focus, 24 measures were selected according to potential data availability on cost. However, we were unable to obtain proper data to estimate costs in four of the measures. Countries were selected looking at the possibility for balance across different and distinct national welfare and adult learning systems, a geographic spread across Europe, and differences in levels of participation.

In consequence, the report presents cost estimation in 20 measures in five countries (Belgium (BE), Estonia (EE), France (FR), Lithuania (LT), Austria (AT)). Selecting these measures does not imply they are the most representative or largest in terms of scope and size of all measures within individual member states, but they were considered most relevant for the aims of the study. They are identified and referred to by labels. The label allows for identification of the country where the measure operates by using [the two-digit EU country code](#) and

includes a number to identify a specific measure within a given country. Measures associated to each label are listed, and described in Section 2.1, Table 5.

A range of different data sources was explored to estimate the unit costs, relying mostly on data collected by country experts through desk research and interviews with key informants who are directly involved in the measures. The report also draws on relevant research literature and EU-wide studies, including the Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices (Cedefop, 2020, 2021, 2022/2023); the dedicated section focusing on 'funding career guidance' provides an especially relevant contextual basis for understanding costs in the countries. We also draw on expert papers in Volume I of this series of studies (Cedefop, 2022), particularly by Percy and Hughes (idem, pp. 109-138), on monitoring and evaluation in lifelong guidance systems and services for adults. The paper provides relevant insights into cost estimation, cost savings, and methodological challenges in career guidance, including a return on investment (ROI) study.

The proposed definition of cost categories takes into consideration the approach taken in the study on financing adult learning (Cedefop, 2022). The report focuses on operational costs and excludes activities in measures which include financial support for individuals or companies. Operational costs are divided into staff and other costs. The types of cost included under each of these categories are listed in Table 4. Volume III considers other costs directly related to career guidance provision and integrated activities, but is limited in light of rapid digitalisation of many services during and following the COVID-19 pandemic (Cedefop, 2020), and the lack of information on in-service professional development of career practitioners as another key area for input indicators.

Table 4. **Operational costs of measures/services of career and learning support**

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Staff costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries including payroll taxes and pension contributions covered by the employer, of service management and delivery staff. We explore the total number of staff in FTE involved in the measure/service (total staff), the total number of staff in FTE involved in activities under the scope of the study, and the average salary of staff in activities under the scope of the study. |
| Other costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property costs (building rental/taxes, major building maintenance) whether treated as revenue or capital payback; Building use related expenditure (lighting, heating, minor maintenance, furniture and equipment); Other service-related expenditure (stationery, phone, travel costs); Overhead costs (management and administrative expenses for shared business support services such as human resources, accounting, recruitment expenditure, staff training); Costs clients incur for travel which are reimbursed. |

Source: Cedefop.

We covered recurring costs only, as non-recurring costs (e.g. to set up the activities) are not expected to be substantial and they are likely to be even more complex to gather. We used the same cost categories across activities under study as they can be considered similar enough to have similar costs. In this study, the subject of the analysis is the public costs of measures supporting individuals' careers, and this excludes costs associated with participation in training. Thus, indirect training costs, such as foregone productive work or contributions made by companies, are not considered here. Additional information on the methodology for cost estimations is provided in Section 3.3.

1.3. Overview of limitations

It is important to emphasise that the report is explorative and comparison between costs cannot be considered reliable. In addition to aspects already mentioned in relation to costs and the timing of the data collection for the main study, which overlapped with the global health pandemic, this section outlines the main limitations when reading the report. These are important to understand the results and conclusions as well as the estimated figures on costs. Figures presented in this report need to be understood as tentative and within the context of their calculations.

There are important limitations in the availability and reliability of the data identified. Measures vary in terms of the type of activities they include and the comprehensiveness of their offer, and in respect to the type of career guidance (tools or processes) integrated with other activities. Measures also differ in the intensity and length of career support they offer, the extent to which they are universal measures or those that target specific demographic groups, and by their governance and funding arrangements. It is also not clear what proportion of the measure consists of career guidance also in relation to expenditure. All these elements, as well as limitations in the availability and reliability of data relating to total costs, staff and other costs, make it difficult to ensure comparability in cost estimations within and across Member States.

The report does not include any in-depth evaluation of the quality of career guidance and career support processes embedded in the measures provided. Approaches to evaluating career guidance experiences in relation to the expected outcomes and benefits appropriate to the field (see Cedefop, 2022, Vuorinen and Kettunen, pp. 16-17, Table 2 for a list of possible outcomes), are discussed in Vol. I (Cedefop et al, 2022) and Vol. II (Cedefop, 2023). Volume I expert papers (Cedefop, 2022, particularly Bielecki, Płachecki and Stasiowski, pp. 29-56; Percy and Hughes, pp. 109-138) provide important reviews of

evaluation studies undertaken in different countries, and the limitations of commonly used indicators and data collected across sectors in relation to career guidance support. Percy and Hughes (2022) also address the difficulty of random control trials and using counterfactuals in career guidance evaluations, as well as providing alternative methods, due in part to the influence of other factors on effectiveness and ethical considerations related to using control groups. They go further to consider that ‘Disentangling guidance from jointly located activities may even be an inappropriate way of understanding the benefits of holistic programmes, where such activities might include informal or formal training, job search / application assistance, health support, workplace reintegration assistance, and financial incentives (whether for jobseeker, support provider, or employer)’ (idem. p.115).

The research team managed to reach informants for all the measures except for one (FR3) where there was no response. In some cases, key informants were either not in a position to share administrative data or did not have access to relevant data themselves. Other challenges faced by country experts employed for the study included inconsistencies between different sources consulted and difficulties in finding data on costs and participation from the same year for a given measure ⁽³⁾.

There is limited availability of data across the EU at the sub-national level. Searching documentation on the measures to consider for the study was complex, as none of the mapped data sources provided comprehensive data at the sub-national level. Clasen et al. (2016) argued that this may undermine the reliability of the data, as expenditure by sub-national governments may not be included in the national figures. However, the OECD (2018) remarks that underreporting issues may often be less severe. First, it is not the case that for all countries sub-national governments (e.g. regions) contribute to overall expenditure on career development measures and services. Second, even when this is the case, it is likely that expenditure at this level is negligible in relation to national expenditure. The present study focuses on national data, except in cases in which the measures are at sub-national level.

The challenge of gathering reliable data on costs has been documented in studies that have attempted to conduct cost estimations or analyse the costs of career guidance and counselling services and their challenges (Box 1). A study was undertaken on behalf of the European Commission on developing simplified cost options related to training the unemployed, provision of employment services, and training for people in employment (European Commission, 2018).

⁽³⁾ To be able to calculate the cost per participant, the data on costs and participants should relate to the same year.

This study highlighted the challenge of establishing a harmonised European methodological approach to defining cost options, and unit cost estimations, largely owing to lack of data availability, limitations in the quality of the data collected, and variations in methods and tools used to collect such data.

A review of other studies that have attempted to conduct cost estimations or analyse the cost of career guidance and counselling services have revealed that different methodological approaches within and across Member States are used when there is insufficient data. This makes comparability in cost estimations within and across Member States virtually impossible. They can be based on a range of variables: staff salaries, continuous training and development activities of career practitioners, equipment, rent, and support staff can be used to compute a per-participant cost. Efforts to reach a break-down on the actual costs of individual interventions by the different activities and level of support they include have largely been futile. The challenge of trying to determine actual unit costs of such services are further complicated by the high level of cross-subsidisation of lifelong guidance services, rigid budget headlines that do not correspond to the overall objectives of the measures, and resistance from institutions to provide detailed data on costs (OECD, 2021).

In some Member States there is service fragmentation stemming from measures being outsourced to various service providers or where there are several sources or responsible entities. This fragmentation means that staff and other costs are collected by individual providers and not always captured in a centralised management system (noting these systems do not exist in all Member States). This makes the task of estimating the cost of individual activities and unit costs difficult to calculate. It adds to the complexity of relating unit costs to outputs and, eventually, when all needed data are collected on outcomes. This further relates to the lack of centralised tracking data for outcomes and quasi-experimental research in this area that is normally required to generate robust impact evidence, and the high costs and time involved, as discussed by Percy and Hughes (2022). They add that the difficulty of counterfactual studies in career support activities relates also to ethical considerations and the multiple factors influencing individual decision-making, and enabling or hindering career development. Measures can also be funded by multiple sources and the mechanism to allocate funds (e.g. lump-sum, measure specific, performance-based funding) within a single measure can vary depending on the funding source. This is not necessarily a problem, but it poses challenges for data collection, as well as organisation and provision of services covering the widest population of target service users.

Box 1. Literature on costs of career guidance services and measures

Hughes and Hogg (2018) conducted a cost-benefit analysis of a regional National Careers Service provider in England that investigated national financial investment in local careers services for adults

Behaghel et al. (2014) compared costs of public services and private career services in France. This study specifically questions the payment by results (PBR) approach as their research suggests that the model of funding impacted on the quality of career support made available to unemployed clients. Their cost benefit analysis found that the public programme was more effective and cheaper than those provided by the private sector.

Benmarker et al. (2013) investigated whether it would be cost effective to contract out career services compared to continued public provision in Sweden.

A Lane et al. (2017) study provided an economic evaluation of the National Careers Service in England, which was able to identify only limited positive impacts directly related to engagement with the service.

Percy and Dodd (2020) explored three levels of economic benefits of career guidance and counselling from the perspectives of the individual, employer/organisation and State.

Another study conducted in the UK focused on reducing the costs of career services by introducing a new online method to provide advice to job seekers (Belot et al., 2019).

A paper by Hooley, Percy and Neary (2023) ⁽⁴⁾ drawing on UK effectiveness impact studies, which proposes a Career guidance guarantee, complete with a fiscal value per head of increased expenditure needed, reviews decades of key findings on the benefits of career guidance in relation to its cost and savings for society.

Source: Cedefop.

⁽⁴⁾ The Career guidance guarantee is a plan to achieve the improvements that are proposed for a more effective lifelong guidance system. To implement it in full, the authors state that government 'would need to spend an additional GBP 315 million on youth careers services and an additional GBP 235 million on adult careers services'. They calculate that this 'equates to an average additional spend of GBP 47 per person on career guidance for young people and an additional GBP 6 per head on working age adults.'

CHAPTER 2. Overview of measures

2.1. Measures under review

This section presents an overview of the measures that were selected to be studied. The full list can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. **Measures selected per country for in-depth research**

| Country and measure code | Title of measure in English | Title of measure in the original language |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Austria | | |
| AT1 | Counselling for jobseekers and enterprises | <i>Beratung durch Betreuungs- und Beratungseinrichtungen (BBE)</i> |
| AT2 | Career information centres | <i>Beratung in BIZen</i> |
| AT3 | Individual action plans | <i>Betreuungsvereinbarung; Individuelle Betreuungspläne</i> |
| AT4 | Educational guidance and counselling for adults | <i>Initiative Bildungsberatung Österreich im Bereich Erwachsenenbildung</i> |
| AT5 | Work assistance for the disabled | <i>Arbeitsassistenz für Behinderte und sonstige Unterstützungsmaßnahmen der BSBs (Bundessozialämter)</i> |
| Belgium-Flanders | | |
| BE1 | Career guidance vouchers | <i>Loopbaancheques</i> |
| BE2 | Individual vocational training programme (IBO) | <i>Individuele beroepsopleiding (IBO)</i> |
| BE3 | Validation of non-formal and informal learning | <i>RAC/VPL</i> |
| Estonia | | |
| EE1 | Career counselling | <i>Karjäärinõustamine</i> |
| EE2 | Job search training/workshop | <i>Tööotsingu töötuba</i> |
| EE3 | Peer coaching | <i>Kogemusnõustamine</i> |
| EE4 | Coaching for working life | <i>Tööharjutus</i> |
| EE5 | Job club | <i>Tööklubi</i> |
| EE6 | Youth prop-up programme | <i>Noorte Tugila</i> |
| France | | |
| FR1 | Advice in professional evolution | <i>Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle, CEP</i> |
| FR2 | Local missions | <i>Missions Locales</i> |
| FR3 | Plan for Investment in competences | <i>Plan d'investissement dans les competences, PIC</i> |
| FR4 | Career support provided by the Job Centre | <i>Accompagnement Pôle Emploi</i> |
| Lithuania | | |
| LT1 | Let's move! (YG) | <i>Judam</i> |

| Country and measure code | Title of measure in English | Title of measure in the original language |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| LT2 | Enhancing youth social competences (YG) | <i>Jaunimo socialinių kompetencijų didinimas</i> |
| LT3 | AIKOS: Open information, counselling and guidance system | <i>Atvira Informavimo Konsultavimo Orientavimo Sistema</i> |
| LT4 | Career support service package (multiple services under the one package) | <i>Karjeros palaikymo paslaugų paketas</i> |
| LT5 | Professional rehabilitation | <i>Profesinė Reabilitacija</i> |
| LT6 | EURES | <i>EURES Lietuvoje</i> |

Source: Cedefop.

2.2. Activities covered under the measures

The following table provides an overview of the 24 measures covered in this report by country and by activity they include (within scope of the study). Based on the scope of activities each measure provides, it was possible to create a simple typology of measures that allows exploring cost in a more meaningful way. As shown in Table 6, all measures cover either the provision of information or guidance and advice to varying degrees (Type 1), some with initial outreach (AT1, BE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, LT1). Activities in Type 2 also provide skills assessment and/or validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) and activities in Type 3 include short-work experiences, and motivational or basic training. The measures with the most comprehensive offer of activities are in Type 4.

Table 6. **Typology of measures**

| Type | Measures |
|--|--|
| Type 1: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance | AT2, AT4, EE1, EE2, EE3, LT3, LT6 |
| Type 2: 1 + skills assessments and/or VNFIL | AT3, BE3 |
| Type 3: 2 + work experience or training | AT1 (*), AT5, BE1, BE2, EE4, EE5, FR1, FR2, FR3, LT2, LT4, LT5 |
| Type 4: 2 + work experience and training | EE6, LT1, FR4 |

(*) AT1 has no skills audit or VNFIL activity.

Source: Cedefop.

2.3. Target user group for each measure

To compare and contextualise the unit cost of measures within and across Member States, in addition to the activities included in each measure it is important to take into consideration whether the measures are universal or target specific demographic groups.

Table 7 shows specific user groups targeted by measure and type. The research explored whether the measures targeted all adult groups or a specific user group. These included

- (a) The unemployed, including PES registered and non-registered as well as the long-term unemployed (Unempl.);
- (b) the low-qualified employed (LowQ Empl.); jobseekers, including employed and unemployed (Jobseek);
- (c) young people, aged 18-29 (Youth);
- (d) older workers, aged 55+ (Older);
- (e) the low-qualified either employed or not employed (Low qual.);
- (f) the low-skilled (Low skill);
- (g) other: this includes women, migrants/refugees, people with disabilities, lone parents, former prisoners, apprentices, those under redundancy notice, career changers (Other).

Given the nature of the database from which the measures were selected (see Chapter 1) it was found that most of the measures target the unemployed (registered or not registered with PES) (14), while young and low-qualified employees are also common as target groups. Measures which offer a wider range of activities more frequently target several demographic user groups. This is an important consideration when examining the unit cost of measures.

Table 7. **Participant groups targeted by the measures, by measure type**

| | All | Unempl. | LowQ Empl.. | Jobseek | Youth | Older | Low qual. | Low skill | Other |
|--|-----|---------|-------------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Type 1: Outreach, information, and guidance | | | | | | | | | |
| AT2 | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| AT4 | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| EE1 | ■ | | | | ■ | | | | |
| EE2 | | | | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ |
| EE3 | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | ■ |
| FR2 | | | | | ■ | | | | |
| LT3 | ■ | | | | | | | | |

| | All | Unempl. | LowQ Empl.. | Jobseek | Youth | Older | Low qual. | Low skill | Other |
|--|-----|---------|-------------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| LT6 | | | | | | | | | |
| Type 2: Outreach, information & guidance, skills assessments and/or VNIL | | | | | | | | | |
| AT3 | | | | | | | | | |
| BE3 | | | | | | | | | |
| Type 3: Outreach, information & guidance, skills assessments, work experience or training | | | | | | | | | |
| AT1 | | | | | | | | | |
| AT5 | | | | | | | | | |
| BE1 | | | | | | | | | |
| BE2 | | | | | | | | | |
| EE4 | | | | | | | | | |
| EE5 | | | | | | | | | |
| FR1 | | | | | | | | | |
| FR2 | | | | | | | | | |
| FR3 | | | | | | | | | |
| LT2 | | | | | | | | | |
| LT4 | | | | | | | | | |
| LT5 | | | | | | | | | |
| Type 4: Comprehensive coverage of activities | | | | | | | | | |
| EE6 | | | | | | | | | |
| FR4 | | | | | | | | | |
| LT1 | | | | | | | | | |

Source: Cedefop.

2.4. Level of intensity of measures

The intensity of support, its length and/or frequency affect the cost of the measures. These vary considerably, although the quality of services (contents), assessed in relation to effectiveness and outcomes, was not taken into consideration due to the specific scope of this volume. It is appropriate to distinguish between measures which are limited to the provision of information about services and activities, those which offer guidance tools and career platforms, and staff supported guidance interventions such as career counselling processes, aiming at resolving particular career related problems through following different steps depending on needs and methods used. Some information provision, however, is always embedded in career guidance

provisions, including self-help digital resources and more collaborative career counselling.

Table 8 shows that the more comprehensive the offer of activities by measure (e.g. Type 3 and 4), the more intensive the level and length of career support tends to be. Type 1 measures, which are generally standard or interactive online information systems, provide information on careers and education and training opportunities. Measures vary in their level of intensity and length of support activity offered: these tend to be lower for measures that are universal in the sense that they are open to all the adult population, and greater for measures that target specific demographic user groups. However, this is not always consistent as there is wide variability. This is also interesting considering the more recent expansion of all-age lifelong guidance services that cater to both the young and school students as well as adults in all situations.

Table 8. **Intensity and length of support**

| Level of intensity | Type 1 | Type 2 | Type 3 | Type 4 |
|---|----------------|--------|--|----------|
| 1. Measures with a sole / main focus on providing information infrastructure | AT2, LT3 | | | |
| 2. Measures with a focus on providing short advice / tailored information | LT6 | | | |
| 3. Measures combining short advice / tailored information with the provision of short counselling processes | AT4, EE1, EE2, | AT3 | BE1, FR1, LT4, FR2 | FR4 |
| 4. Measures providing blends of short and extended consultation processes / long-term case management | EE3 | BE3 | AT1, AT5, BE2, EE4, EE5, FR3, LT2, LT5 | EE6, LT1 |

Source: Cedefop.

CHAPTER 3. Data availability

3.1. Overview of available cost data

The research sought to identify data on total costs, staff costs, other costs, and number of participants for each measure (see Section 1.2). The data collection process involved review of documentation about the measures and collection of information through interviews with key informants directly involved in the measures. Table 9 below summarises the data collected and subsequently reviewed for the analysis.

Table 9. **Summary of data availability on cost**

| | Measure 1 | Measure 2 | Measure 3 | Measure 4 | Measure 5 | Measure 6 |
|----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| AT | AT1 | AT2 | AT3 | AT4 (*) | AT5 | |
| BE | BE1 | BE2 | BE3 | | | |
| EE | EE1 | EE2 | EE3 | EE4 | EE5 | EE6 |
| FR | FR1 | FR2 | FR3 | FR4 | | |
| LT | LT1 | LT2 | LT3 | LT4 | LT5 | LT6 |

■ The data are available directly or allow for cost estimation.
 ■ Only partial data available.
 ■ Insufficient data to estimate costs.
 ■ No additional measures mapped for the country.

(*) Data collected for one region only.

Source: Cedefop.

In the table, the measures in green (EE1, EE2, FR2 and LT2) signal that the data were directly available from national sources. This corresponds directly to activities that fall under the scope of this study: there was no need for additional estimations for these measures. For one measure also highlighted in green in the table (FR4), the data collected include activities outside the scope of this study, so some estimation was needed to calculate the cost of the activities according to the scope of the study.

The measures marked in orange (AT1, AT2, AT4, AT5, BE1, BE2, BE3, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR1, LT2, LT3, LT6) are those for which only partial information

could be collected from informants or documentation. In most cases, this still enabled the estimation of unit costs.

Relevant data were not available for four measures (AT3, FR3, LT4, LT5) with several reasons for gaps.

- (a) Certain measures include activities inside and outside the scope of this study and it was not possible to determine the share of costs dedicated to activities under the scope of the study. For example, measure FR3 (PIC) includes various career guidance measures focused on professional training of clients/beneficiaries. For LT5 (Professional rehabilitation), the measure involves training activities outside the scope of the study yet covered in the cost of the measure. While this might serve as an example of training and adult learning policies working together, it was not possible to utilise the measure in relation to the scope of the study.
- (b) Certain measures include activities that are outsourced to external service providers making accurate cost calculations close to impossible, without further investigation. This was the case for LT5.
- (c) Informants were not able to provide estimations of the time spent by staff on the activities under the scope of the study or the proportion of staff time allocated to them. This applies to AT3 (Individual action plans). In the case of AT3, certain activities within the measure (e.g. devising training plans and their follow-up) are interlinked with other roles and responsibilities assigned to PES employment counsellors and it is not possible to differentiate between costs and resources. This is also normal for integrated career support approach or that tailored to the needs of service users.
- (d) The cost of all PES provision is calculated as a whole and not disaggregated for individual measures. This applies to FR3.

For the 20 measures coded in green or orange in Table 9, some cost data are available. Often, there is both data on budgets (planned) and expenditure ⁽⁵⁾ but in some cases only one of the two is available as presented in Table 10.

Table 10. **Type of cost data available**

| Measure | Expenditure | Budget |
|---------|-------------|--------|
| AT1 | | √ |
| AT2 | √ | |
| AT4 | | √ |
| AT5 | √ | |
| BE1 | √ | √ |

⁽⁵⁾ Budget refers to proposed expenditure, while expenditure refers to actual expenditure.

| Measure | Expenditure | Budget |
|---------|-------------|--------|
| BE2 | √ | |
| BE3 | | √ |
| EE1 | √ | √ |
| EE2 | √ | √ |
| EE3 | √ | √ |
| EE4 | √ | √ |
| EE5 | √ | √ |
| EE6 | | √ |
| FR1 | √ | |
| FR2 | √ | |
| FR4 | √ | √ |
| LT1 | √ | √ |
| LT2 | √ | √ |
| LT3 | √ | |
| LT6 | √ | |

Source: Cedefop.

3.2. Cost categories: staff and/or other

Table 11 shows the available data in the 20 measures selected by cost category. Data on total costs are available for 18 measures (all except AT2 and LT3). Information on total staff costs of the measure is available for nine measures (AT2, EE1, EE2, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT6). Data on total other costs explicitly indicated are available only for six measures (EE1, EE2, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2); however, it was possible to find 'other costs' categories included in the 'total cost' for all measures except in AT2, LT3 and LT6.

Table 11. Data available by cost category

| Measure | Total costs | Total staff costs | Total other costs |
|---------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| AT1 | √ | | |
| AT2 | | √ | |
| AT4 | √ | | |
| AT5 | √ | | |
| BE1 | √ | | |
| BE2 | √ | | |
| BE3 | √ | | |
| EE1 | √ | √ | √ |
| EE2 | √ | √ | √ |
| EE3 | √ | | |
| EE4 | √ | | |
| EE5 | √ | | |
| EE6 | √ | | |
| FR1 | √ | | |
| FR2 | √ | √ | √ |
| FR4 | √ | √ | √ |
| LT1 | √ | √ | √ |
| LT2 | √ | √ | √ |
| LT3 | | √ | |
| LT6 | √ ⁽⁶⁾ | √ | |

Source: Cedefop.

3.2.1. Total staff costs and staff cost categories

Total staff costs are available for nine measures (AT2, EE1, EE2, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT6) (see table 12). Cost (see section 1) pertains mainly to salaries and not to professional development or other expenditure associated with staff. EE2 only has information on total staff cost; AT5 and EE6 have data on the number of FTE staff involved in the measures, though data on total staff costs is not available. It was possible to establish the total number of staff (FTE) involved in ten measures (AT2, AT5, EE1, EE6, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT6). For all these ten measures, except AT5, data on the number of staff (FTE) dedicated to the activities that fall under the scope of the study are available. Measure AT5 offers a range of extended and specialised service provision for individuals with disabilities, so it is not possible to break down the number of staff FTE dedicated to activities specifically under the scope of the study.

⁽⁶⁾ Not full costs (explained in more detail below). Also, staff costs and other costs can only be estimated for funding provided by the national government so not reported here.

Table 12. Data available on number of staff and their average salary

| Measure | Total staff costs | Number of staff FTE in the measure | Number of staff FTE in activities under the scope of the study | Average salary |
|---------|-------------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------|
| AT1 | | | | |
| AT2 | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| AT4 | | | | |
| AT5 | | √ | | |
| BE1 | | | | |
| BE2 | | | | |
| BE3 | | | | |
| EE1 | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| EE2 | √ | | | |
| EE3 | | | | |
| EE4 | | | | |
| EE5 | | | | |
| EE6 | | √ | √ | √ |
| FR1 | | | | |
| FR2 | √ | √ | √ | |
| FR4 | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| LT1 | √ | √ | √ | |
| LT2 | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| LT3 | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| LT6 | √ | √ | √ | √ |

Source: Cedefop.

Information on the number of staff (FTE) is unknown for the remaining ten measures (AT1, AT4, BE1, BE2, BE3, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, FR1). There are several reasons for this.

- (a) For AT1, BE1, BE2, and BE3 staff costs are included in total cost of the measure but no aggregate data are available. For BE3 (which centres on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and involves extended career counselling), costs that are known relate to the cost of assessment and issue of the certificate, but not for dedicated counselling. This may be a significant part of the PES employment counsellor job where the process is extensive, even if its contents in this case are not known, but it is not included in cost estimations.
- (b) For AT4 (Educational guidance service) several providers are involved in the implementation of the measure. Most providers offer career counselling or equivalent or related services under different funding frameworks. Staff are not dedicated to one specific service but work across several. Similarly, for EE3 (Peer coaching), a range of providers are involved in the implementation of this measure and total staff numbers are not known.
- (c) For EE2, staff involved in providing the job search training workshops also work across a range of other activities and services provided by the PES. It

is not possible to calculate the exact number of FTE staff dedicated to the measure alone.

- (d) Information has not been identified (or is outdated) for measures AT1, EE4, EE5, FR1.

Information on the average salary of relevant staff is available for seven measures (AT2, EE1, EE6, FR4, LT2, LT3, LT6). Data on average salaries are difficult to compare and should be treated with caution; different types of staff salaries were included in the measures. In the career guidance field, there are different roles for career practitioners: this can involve those having diverse professional qualifications, training and job profiles, including career specialists, advisers, employment counsellors, career professionals, other support staff involved in career guidance. Professionalisation across countries in career guidance among career guidance providers varies widely. Some professionals working in the labour market sector in several countries do not have a background, certification or other qualification in career guidance or directly related to career guidance prior to entry; those in the public employment services may only have in-service training (see Cedefop, 2009 and 2021).

In the measures study average salary can refer to net salary (after deductions) (LT3) or gross salary (LT6). In some cases, average salary is reported hourly (AT1, AT2) and in other cases monthly (EE1, EE6, LT2, LT3, LT6) or annually (FR4). It is therefore not possible to use data on monthly average salaries as a proxy to estimate annual salaries; also, in some countries, annual salaries can be based on a 12 or 13 monthly salary basis. Nevertheless, some variation in average salaries can be observed as relevant to the data collection period:

- (a) for AT1 and AT2, the average salary of relevant career/employment counsellors was reported to be an hourly rate of EUR 32.72 (gross);
- (b) for EE1, the average salary of relevant employment counsellors was EUR 1517 87 per month (unclear if net or gross);
- (c) for EE6 information on the average salary is only known for relevant staff at the local level and was reported to be between EUR 800-1 000 per month;
- (d) for FR4, in 2014 ⁽⁷⁾, payroll per FTE was EUR 58 780 per annum;
- (e) for measure LT2, the average salary of staff is EUR 1 874,91 per month (gross), compared to EUR 635 for LT3 (excluding tax) and EUR 1 486 for LT6 (gross).

⁽⁷⁾ Reference year outside the scope of the study.

3.2.2. Other cost categories

Other costs can include property costs (rental, taxes, maintenance), building use related expenditure (lightening, heating), service-related expenditure (stationery, telephone), overhead costs (management and administrative expenses, including human resources, accounting, recruitment, and, in a few cases, staff training) and costs incurred by clients. Data on total ‘other cost’ was reported in six of the 20 measures with info on cost (EE1, EE2, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2). However, it was possible to find information on other cost, included in the overall ‘total cost’ calculation in 16 measures (AT1, AT2, AT5, BE2, BE3, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2, LT6). For AT4, LT3 and FR1 no data on other costs was identified. For BE1, it was reported that staff and other cost calculations are included in the total cost of the service, but this information has not been broken down by categories of costs and is not reported here. Table 13 shows the inclusion of different type of costs in the ‘total cost’ reported (in the table as ‘In total cost’), the measures in which certain costs categories are not included in the ‘total cost’ (‘Not included’ in the table) and the measures in which ‘total other cost’ is reported and is possible to differentiate between categories (refer to ‘As separated ’in the table). A variety of costs can be included under the category ‘other costs’. The category of ‘miscellaneous costs’ includes a further variety of possible costs that are reported ⁽⁸⁾.

Table 13. **Types of cost included in total cost**

| Measure | Property costs (building rental / taxes, major building maintenance) | Building use related expenditure lighting, heating, minor maintenance, furniture, equipment | Other service-related expenditure stationery, phone, travel costs, etc. | Overhead costs management administrative expenses for shared business support services, including staff training | Costs clients incur for travel which are reimbursed | Misc costs |
|---------|---|--|--|---|---|------------|
| AT1 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | | |
| AT2 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | | |
| AT4 | | | | | | |

⁽⁸⁾ Communication costs and training of career counsellors (EE1); subcontracted services, support to mobility, cost of other interventions, depreciation and risk financing (*dotations aux provisions and reprises de provision*) (FR2); taxes, depreciation, subventions provided by the association, cost of previous deficit, other external charges, social charges, and risk financing (*dotations aux provisions*) (FR4); communication costs and training of career counsellors, mandatory health insurance for the participants (LT1); communication costs and training of career counsellors, coffee breaks (LT2).

| | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| AT5 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | |
| BE1 | | | | | | |
| BE2 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | | Not included | |
| BE3 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | | |
| EE1 | Not included | Not included | Not included | Not included | As separated | As separated |
| EE2 | Not included | Not included | As separated | Not included | As separated | |
| EE3 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | | |
| EE4 | In total cost | In total cost | | In total cost | | |
| EE5 | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | In total cost | | |
| EE6 | Not included | | In total cost | In total cost | | |
| FR1 | | | | | | |
| FR2 | As separated | As separated | As separated | Not included | Not included | As separated |
| FR4 | Not included | Not included | | Not included | | As separated |
| LT1 | As separated | As separated | As separated | As separated | As separated | As separated |
| LT2 | Not included | Not included | As separated | As separated | As separated | As separated |
| LT3 | | | | | | |
| LT6 | Not included | Not included | In total cost | In total cost | | In total cost |

Source: Cedefop.

A closer look at the information provided in Table 13 shows certain similarities and differences in the types of costs that are/or not covered in total cost calculations in measures within and across Member States. Differences can partly be explained by variations in the governance structures and funding arrangements of the measures (discussed in Sections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5), but this is not always consistent.

In Austria, costs clients incur for travel, which are reimbursed, is included in total costs for measure AT5 (work assistance for the disabled) but not for measures AT1 (counselling for jobseekers) or AT2 (career information centres). The main entity responsible for the overall management of AT5 is the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection; for AT1 and AT2, these are both national PES measures.

In Estonia, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5 are all PES measures. Property costs, building use, other service-related expenditure and overhead costs are included in total cost calculations for EE3, EE4 and EE5, but not for EE1 or EE2; for the latter, other services-related expenditure is covered in total cost calculations).

In Lithuania, the PES is responsible for the overall implementation of measures LT1, LT2 and LT6. All other cost categories are included in total calculations of LT1, but there is no consistency in other cost categories being included in the total cost calculations or not for LT2 and LT6. According to the research conducted in Lithuania, property and building costs are not included in

total costs calculation, except for LT1. Professional development of staff is covered under overhead costs (and for LT1 and LT2) as other costs. Under overhead costs, training is separately identified for LT6 only.

3.2.3. What data are available on participation?

It was possible to collect information on participants for all the 20 measures for which cost data are available. This information is summarised in Table 14 below. This is necessary to be able to calculate the estimated unit cost per participant (see section 3.3).

Table 14. **Number of participants/participations**

| Measure | Reference year | Number of participants |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|
| AT1: Counselling for jobseekers and enterprises | 2019 | 167 300 (*) |
| AT2: Career information centres | 2019 | 14 882 |
| AT4: Educational guidance and counselling for adults | 2018 | 18 336 |
| AT5: Work assistance for the disabled | 2019 | 17 233 |
| BE1: Career guidance vouchers | 2019 | 26 179 |
| BE2: Individual vocational training programme (IBO) | 2019 | 11 642 |
| BE3: Validation of non-formal and informal learning | 2017 | 799 (**) |
| EE1: Career counselling | 2019 | 62 884 (*) |
| EE2: Job search training/workshop | 2019 | 13 021 (*) |
| EE3: Peer coaching | 2019 | 359 |
| EE4: Coaching for working life | 2019 | 1 132 |
| EE5: Job club | 2019 | 3 255 |
| EE6: Youth prop-up programme | 2019-21 | 6 000 (expected) (***) |
| FR1: Advice in professional evolution | 2020 | Information not accessible |
| FR2: Local missions (Missions Locales) | 2017 | 1 109 000 |
| FR4: Career support provided by the Job Centre | 2018 | 3 634 257 |
| LT1: Let's move! (YG) | 04/ 2019-09/2020 | 328 (expected) (****) |
| LT2: Enhancing youth social competences (YG) | 2019-21 | 13 000 (expected) (***) |
| LT3: ALKOS: Open information, counselling and guidance system | 2019 | Information not accessible |
| LT6: EURES | 2019 | 10 000 |

(*) Participants

(**) This relates to the number of individuals who were awarded a certificate

(***) Expected for the period 2019-21

(****) Expected for the period April 2019 until September 2020

Source: Cedefop.

Data on the number of participants or 'participations', including those who participate more than once, is collected for all 20 measures. As shown in the table

above, data on the 'actual' number of participants/participations is available for 18 measures (AT1, AT2, AT4, AT5, BE1, BE2, BE3, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2, LT6). The following caveats should be taken into consideration when examining the number of participants. The reference year for reporting data on the number of participants varies within and across the Member States. In some cases, the expected number of participants is provided (EE6, LT1, LT2) and therefore the number of actual participants/participations is unclear. It is not clear if the number of participants also refers to the number of completions.

For AT1, EE1, EE2, data are collected on the number of participations. For measures EE1 and EE2, data are collected on both the number of participations and the number of unique participants. The number of participations refers to the number of times a service was attended by an individual participant/or group of participants. The data are used to monitor how frequently participants attend specific measures on single or multiple occasions. For EE1, attendance in one counselling session by an individual equals one participation; attendance by an individual in ten sessions equals ten participations. A group session may be delivered ten times so each time ten individuals participate this amounts to 100 participations. The counting of 'participations' can monitor when activities are repeated by the same person. A high number of 'participations' demonstrates where individuals attend the same activity on multiple occasions.

In the case of BE3 the available data are of participants who complete the whole validation process; no data were found on the number of participants who participate only in the initial stages of validation or guidance they were part of.

3.2.4. Data limitations, trends and robustness

The data available for the 20 measures for which cost data are available suffer from important limitations. In around half of the measures, data disaggregated by cost categories (staff costs and other costs) were not available. This information was more often missing when the provision of the service is decentralised to a variety of providers at regional or local level (see section 3.3.2 below).

When available, data on 'other costs' show great variability in terms of the type of costs covered and what costs are included, or not, in total costs. This hinders the comparability of data under this cost category across measures and countries, and prevents collection of essential information on career staff in-service training and professional development; this is an area requiring attention, even if there are signs of activity in recent years, since the pandemic, of public provider investment in continuous training and availability of adult learning for career practitioners within and across different sectors (Cedefop, 2021). Data on

staff costs are likely to cover more similar costs across measures than 'other costs' although there might be some differences related to the inclusion, or not, of some unusual staff-related costs, such as annual bonuses.

Data on average salaries also show some variation. For instance, they can refer to net salary (after deductions) (LT3) or gross salary (LT6) in Lithuania. Data on staff salaries are reported over different reference years compared to data on expenditure or staff costs (FR4).

There are data on the number of participants for most of the measures. However, in some cases, the number of 'participations' refers to each career counselling session or other service provided (EE1 and EE2). In the case of three measures (EE6, LT1, LT2), the data used refer to the 'expected number of participants' for a given period rather than actual number of participants.

The cost estimation is based on the total known costs and the number of participants identified to calculate the unit costs (see Section 3.2). In the cases where there are no data on participants but there is information on participations, the cost per participation has been calculated. In two cases (BE1 and BE3), the cost per participant is given by the value of the reimbursements from the funding body to the service providers. In the case of AT4, standard unit costs have been used. These are not strictly the cost per participant as they cover only face-to-face career or employment counselling; they exclude career or other types of counselling in other settings and consultations for the provision of information or redirection or referral to other services.

Data on staff costs and other costs are shown for informative purposes but not used in calculations or further analysis due to limited comparability across measures.

3.3. Documenting and estimating services and unit costs

3.3.1. Overview of costs and unit costs of measures

Table 15 presents an overview of the available data needed for estimating unit cost. The table presents the year of reference, the total cost, indicating whether the data are from budget allocation or actual expenditure, the staff cost and other costs when available, and the cost per participant. Section 3.3.2 shows more details on how the unit cost has been calculated.

Table 15. Availability of data for calculating unit costs

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure/budget) | Staff costs | Other cost | Cost per participant |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Austria | | | | | |
| AT1: Guidance and counselling services on behalf of PES | 2019 | EUR 103 800 000 (budget) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 620 |
| AT2: Career counselling in Career information centres (BIZ) (PES) | 2019 | INA | EUR 731 000 (exp.) | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | Information not available |
| AT4: Educational guidance and counselling for adults in upper Austria | 2018 | EUR 788 900 (budget) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total other costs | EUR 343 |
| AT5: Work assistance for the disabled | 2019 | EUR 32 294 654 (exp.) | INA | INA | EUR 1 874 |
| Belgium-Flanders | | | | | |
| BE1: Career guidance vouchers (PES) | 2019 | EUR 22 379 500 (exp.) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but costs included in total other costs | EUR 550 |
| BE2: Individual vocational training programme (IBO) | 2019 | EUR 3 300 000 (exp.) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 283 |
| BE3: Validation of NFIL (PES) RAC | 2017 | EUR 800 000 (budget) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 150 (guidance phase) to EUR 820 or EUR 1 195 (leading to certification) |
| Estonia | | | | | |
| EE1: PES career counselling | 2019 | EUR 1 687 882 (exp.) | EUR 1 330,369 Included in total costs (79% of total costs) | EUR 357 513. Certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 27 (per participation) |

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure/ budget) | Staff costs | Other cost | Cost per participant |
|--|-------------------|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| EE2: Job search training/ workshop (PES) | 2019 | EUR 355 451 (exp.) | EUR 348 085 Included in total costs (98% of total costs) | EUR 7,365. Certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 27 (per participation) |
| EE3: Peer coaching (PES) | 2019 | EUR 79 963 (exp.) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but included in total other costs | EUR 223 |
| EE4: Coaching for working life (PES) | 2019 | EUR 1 350 909 (exp.) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total costs | EUR 1 193 |
| EE5: Job club (PES) | 2019 | EUR 270 506 (exp.) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 83 |
| EE6: Youth prop-up programme | 2019-21 | EUR 1 263 398 (budget) | EUR 935 839 (74% of total costs) | EUR 327 559. Certain costs included/not included in other total costs | EUR 211 |
| France | | | | | |
| FR1: Advice in professional evolution | 2020 | EUR 90 000 000 (budget) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total other costs | Information Not Accessible |
| FR2: Missions locales: support services to young people to integrate them in the labour market | 2017 | EUR 719 972 654 (exp.) ⁽⁹⁾ | EUR 497 111 020 Included in total costs (69% of total costs) | EUR 222 861 634. Certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 649 |
| FR4: Career support provided by the Job Centre | 2018 | EUR 2 379 306 238 (exp.) ⁽¹⁰⁾ | EUR 2 160 246 496 Included in total costs (90% of total costs) | EUR 219 059 742. Certain costs included/not included in total costs | EUR 655 |

⁽⁹⁾ For FR2, FR4, LT1, LT2 When staff costs and other costs are added, the total exceeds the total cost provided in the third column.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The Cour des Comptes 2020 report explained that staff numbers had increased. However, some of the difference may also be attributed to calculations given that the numbers for both years came from different sources.

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure/ budget) | Staff costs | Other cost | Cost per participant |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| Lithuania | | | | | |
| LT1: Let's move (YG) | 04/2019 09/2020 | EUR 553 677 (exp.) | EUR 449 389 Included in total costs (81% of total costs) | EUR 104 289 Certain costs included/not included in other total costs | EUR 1 688 |
| LT2: Enhancing youth social competences (YG) | 2019-21 | EUR 5,099,671 (budget) | EUR 4 356 230 Included in total costs (85% of total costs) | EUR 743,441 Certain costs included/not included in other total costs | EUR 392 |
| LT3: AIKOS open information, counselling and guidance system | 2019 | INA | EUR 3,810 (exp.) | INA (costs not accounted for under this service) | Information Not Accessible |
| LT6: EURES | 2019 | EUR 182 692 (exp.) | EUR 142 656 (78% of total costs) | Sum unknown but certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 18 |

Data on budgets are only used when data on expenditure are not available. The breakdown of the total costs in the categories staff and other costs is presented in the subsequent two columns where available.

Source: Cedefop.

3.3.2. Cost estimation

This subsection provides further details of the calculations of estimated costs presented in Table 15.

AT1: Guidance and counselling services on behalf of PES (*Beratung durch Betreuungs- und Beratungseinrichtungen, BBE*)

In Austria, the PES provides grants to Care and counselling organisations (*Betreuungs- und Beratungseinrichtungen*) to provide career guidance and counselling services on its behalf. The grants cover staff and equipment costs. Information is available on the total funding from the PES per year (EUR 103.8 million in 2019). Staff and other costs vary by individual provider and there are no aggregated data at the national level. Data on the number of participants are also available from official sources (Nagl, I et al., 2018).

The cost per participant (EUR 620) has been calculated by dividing the total funding (EUR 103.8 million) between the number of participants (167 300).

AT2: Career counselling in career information centres (PES) (*Beratung in BIZen*)

Career counselling in career information centres is funded by the Austrian government through the budget of the national PES. There is no earmarked funding specifically for career counselling, and information on the total funding of the measure is not available.

Staff costs in 2019 have been estimated in collaboration with informants based on:

- (a) number of participants (14 892 adults);
- (b) assumptions on the average duration of employment counselling interviews (1.5 hours per individual counselling comprising 1 hour counselling and 0.5 hours for preparation/documentation);
- (c) average salary of employment counsellors (hourly rate: EUR 32.72 (gross)).

By multiplying the above values, staff costs are estimated at approximately EUR 731 000.

There are no data on other costs. Due to missing information on total costs, it has not been possible to estimate the cost per participant.

AT4: Educational guidance and counselling for adults (region: Upper Austria) (*Initiative Bildungsberatung Österreich im Bereich Erwachsenenbildung*)

The Educational guidance and counselling for adults is funded by the ESF, the national government and Federal States. The funding mechanisms differ

across the Austrian States: in the case of Upper Austria, the ESF covers 50% of the funding, the Ministry of Education 30%, the Chamber of Labour 13% and the regional government 7%.

Budgets for the measure are based on standard unit costs of EUR 343 per case. According to current funding contracts, a chargeable case is a documented personal, face-to-face career counselling interview. All other activities (online, email, video, telephone counselling) as well as all overhead and other costs must be covered within the standard unit costs. In the monitoring data from 2018, 2 300 face-to-face counselling contacts were reported: this would correspond to a total expense of EUR 788 900. It is not possible to disaggregate the costs into categories. The full number of contacts/participations includes 7 136 career counselling contacts (in all settings: face-to-face, telephone, email, etc.) and 11 200 contacts for provision of information or redirection or referral to other services. If the estimated total expense (EUR 788 900) is divided into the number of contacts/participations (18 336), the unit cost estimated (EUR 43) would be considerably lower than the standard unit costs (EUR 343).

A final account on actual costs will only be available after the end of the funding period in 2021.

AT5: Work assistance for the disabled (*Arbeitsassistenz für Behinderte und sonstige Unterstützungsmaßnahmen der BSBs (Bundessozialämter)*)

The work assistance for persons with disabilities is funded by the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and its nine provincial offices. The total expenditure on this measure in 2019 was EUR 32 294 654. It is not possible to disaggregate these costs into staff and other costs. The number of participants in 2019 was 17 233.

Based on the data available, it is possible to calculate the cost per participation (EUR 1 874) by dividing the total costs (EUR 32 294 654) between the number of participants (17 233).

It should be noted that data refer to the full number of participants, including adults and younger ones. These estimations assume that the costs of delivering the measure to adults is the same as the cost of delivering the measure to younger individuals (under 18 years old).

BE1: Career guidance vouchers (*Loopbaancheques*)

The Flemish regional government finances career guidance vouchers of a value of EUR 550 excluding VAT (individuals contribute EUR 40). Every employee in Flanders (2.5 million people) has a legal right to career guidance and thus to request a voucher. The overall budget established by public authorities is based

on the take-up figures from the previous year. The total sum earmarked in the Flemish government budget 2019 was EUR 24 500 000. The total expenditure is calculated by multiplying the number of vouchers spent (40 690 in 2019) by EUR 550. This amounts to EUR 22 379 500. The number of beneficiaries from June 2018 to June 2019 was 26 179.

It is not possible to disaggregate the costs into categories. The total sum is paid to the dedicated career centres in Flanders and covers both staff and other costs. The cost per participant is given by the value of the voucher (EUR 550).

BE2: Individual vocational training programme (*Individuele beroepsopleiding, IBO*)

The IBO is funded by employers (wages of participants in IBO) and the Flemish employment service, VDAB (costs related to guidance and employment counselling). For this measure, the Flemish employment service receives funds from the regional government and the ESF (45%). The data on costs gathered refer to VDAB costs which cover career guidance and employment counselling only. Total expenditure in 2019 was EUR 3.3 million. There are no data on staff and other costs, though it is reported staff costs are included in total costs. Similarly, the sum for total other costs is unknown but it is reported that certain other cost categories (e.g. property, building use and other service-related expenditure) are included in total other costs.

In 2019, there were 11 642 participants. The cost per participant (EUR 283) has been calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 3 300 000) between the number of participants (11 642).

BE3: Validation of non-formal and informal learning (RAC/VPL)

In Flanders, the validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) is funded by the government (55%) and the European Social Fund (ESF) (45%). The budget for this measure in 2018 was EUR 800 000. There are no data on staff and other costs or on the total number of participants per year.

The budget is allocated to assessment centres which provide validation services to individuals for free (only a small fee of up to EUR 100 can be charged for the practical test). The accredited assessment centre receives:

- (a) a maximum reimbursement of EUR 150 per applicant to offer career guidance on competences or advice during the process of completing the portfolio.
- (a) a reimbursement of EUR 670 or EUR 1 045 for each competence assessment depending on the certificate for which the applicant is being assessed.

The cost per participant is given by these values and ranges from EUR 150 – for participants involved only in the initial phases of the process – to EUR 820

(150+670) or EUR 1 195 (150+1045) for those completing the full validation process leading to a certification.

However, an estimate as part of a cost-benefit analysis of the measure in 2016 points to a higher cost per participant for those that complete the full validation process (EUR 1 683). It is based on the number of hours reported to be spent by the staff involved (PES employment counsellor, assessors and other professionals) which is an average 57.6 hours for the entire process leading up to a professional certificate.

EE1: PES career counselling (*Karjäärinõustamine*)

In Estonia, career counselling provided by PES is funded by the government and the ESF. Total expenditure in the year 2019 was EUR 1 687 882. Staff costs amounted to EUR 1 330 369 (for approximately 80 career counsellors) and other costs to EUR 357 513.

There are no data on the number of participants. Data are collected on the number of participations in each career counselling session provided. Counselling sessions can be provided individually (face-to-face or online sessions of approximately 45 minutes) or in groups of 8 to 16 participants. In 2019, there were a total of 62 884 participations.

Based on the data available, it is possible to calculate the cost per participation (EUR 27) by dividing the total costs (EUR 1 687 882) between the number of participations (62 884).

EE2: Job search training/ workshop (PES) (*Tööotsingu töötuba*)

The job search training workshop is fully funded by the Estonian government. The total expenditure on this measure in 2019 was EUR 355 451, including EUR 348 085 of staff costs and EUR 7 365 of other costs.

There are no data on the number of participants. Data are collected on the number of participations, which in 2019 was 13 021.

The cost per participation (EUR 27) has been calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 355 451) between the number of participations (13 021).

EE3: Peer coaching (PES) (*Kogemusnõustamine*)

Peer coaching is funded by the Estonian government and the ESF. The service is provided by organisations who receive funding from the Estonian PES (Estonian Unemployment Fund). Total public expenditure in 2019 was EUR 79 963. There are no data on staff and other costs. During 2019 the service was provided to 359 participants.

The cost per participant (EUR 223) was calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 79 963) between the number of participants (359).

The data gathered also provide the maximum value per participant. Each hour of service in 2019 was valued at EUR 50. Each recipient may receive up to 10 hours of service provision, which corresponds to a maximum cost of EUR 500 per participant.

EE4: Coaching for working life (PES) (*Tööhajutus*)

Coaching for working life is funded by the national government and the ESF. The implementation of the measure is outsourced to NGOs and private enterprises via public procurement. Total public expenditure in 2019 was EUR 1 350 909. There are no data on staff and other costs. In 2019, there were 1 132 participants.

The cost per participant (EUR 1 193) was calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 1 350 909) between the number of participants (1 132).

EE5: Job club (PES) (*Tööklubi*)

Job club is funded by the national government and the ESF. The implementation of this measure, as in the case of EE4, is outsourced to NGOs and private enterprises via public procurement. Total public expenditure in 2019 was EUR 270 506. There are no data on staff and other costs. In 2019, there were 3 255 participants.

The cost per participant (EUR 83) was calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 270 506) between the number of participants (3 255).

EE6: Youth prop-up programme (*Noorte Tugila*)

The Youth prop-up programme is funded by the national government, the ESF and regional governments. The programme is implemented by local youth centres. The data available only include the public funding from the national government and the ESF. It is estimated that the actual cost of this programme could be up to three times greater if the expenses of regional governments were to be included, but there are no precise data to substantiate this, so this information should be treated with caution.

There are no data on expenditure. The total budget (from the national government and ESF) for the period 2019-21 is EUR 1 263 398. The number of participants expected over this period is 6 000.

The cost per participant (EUR 211) was calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 1 263 398) between the expected number of participants (6 000). This includes the programme coordination costs and the costs of delivering the service

at the local level ⁽¹¹⁾. It is estimated that, on average, EUR 166 is available per person.

FR1: Advice in professional evolution (*Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle, CEP*)

The Advice in professional evolution measure is funded by the French government. It offers career guidance, primarily targeting young people, and includes a comprehensive range of activities. The measure is implemented by various different service providers.

The total budget was EUR 90 million in 2020. There are no data on staff and other costs. No data were found on the number of participants in 2020, so it has not been possible to calculate the cost per participant.

FR2: Local missions (*Missions Locales*)

The local missions provide support services to young people (16 to 25-year-olds) to integrate them into the labour market. They have various funding sources including the French government, the European Union (ESF, Erasmus+ or the Youth Employment Initiative) ⁽¹²⁾, regions, departments, local authorities and private sources. Total costs amounted to EUR 719 972 654 in 2017. Staff costs amounted to EUR 497 111 020. Other costs (EUR 222 861 634) have been calculated by deducting staff costs from the total costs.

In 2017, there were 1 109 000 participants in the local missions.

The cost per participant (EUR 649) was calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 719 972 654) between the number of participants (1 109 000).

FR4: Career support provided by the Job Centre (*Accompagnement Pôle Emploi*)

Career support provided by job centres is funded by the national government ⁽¹³⁾. The most complete data available are from 2018. The cost data refer to expenditure in different activities inside and outside the scope of this study. Staff costs amounted to EUR 3 225.68 million and other costs were EUR 327.1 million.

⁽¹¹⁾ Coordination costs reported in the case of EE6 only.

⁽¹²⁾ The researcher's interpretation of the sources is that these values exclude unemployment benefits and funding of other activities such as training. However, it has not been yet possible to obtain confirmation from informants.

⁽¹³⁾ *Pôle Emploi* also receives funding from the National Professional Union for Employment in Industry and Trade (*Nationale Interprofessionnelle pour l'Emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce UNEDIC*) to cover unemployment benefits (*Assurance Chômage*). *Pôle Emploi* also receives other funding for earmarked programmes.

In 2018, the PES had 37 769 staff members in total. The number of staff involved in the activities under the scope of this study ('follow-up and guidance' and 'support to recruitment') was 25 294.

The following formulas were used to estimate the cost of activities under the scope of this study:

- (a) Staff costs: (number of staff FTE in activity: 25 294 / total staff FTE: 37 769) x staff costs (EUR 3 225.68 million)
- (b) Other costs: (number of staff FTE in activity: 25 294 / total staff FTE: 37 769) x other costs (EUR 327.1 million)

These calculations result in EUR 2 160 246 496 of staff costs and EUR 219 059 742 of other costs. Total expenditure has been calculated by adding these values together (EUR 2 379 306 238).

The cost per participant (EUR 655) was calculated by dividing the estimated total costs (EUR 2 379 306 238) between the number of participants in 2018 (3 634 257).

LT1: Let's move (Youth Guarantee) (*Judam*)

This measure is fully funded through the ESF. The expenditure data available refer to the period April 2019 until September 2020. The staff costs over this period were EUR 449 389. The other costs amounted to EUR 104 289. The total costs (EUR 553 677) have been calculated by adding the staff costs and the other costs.

The cost per participant (EUR 1 688) was calculated by dividing the total costs (EUR 553 677) between the number of participants (328).

LT2: ESF funded project under Youth Guarantee 'Enhancing youth social competences' (*Jaunimo socialinių kompetencijų didinimas*)

This measure is funded through the ESF (98.4%) and by the national government (1.6%). There are data on expenditure, but they do not correspond to full months. Budget data are used here to facilitate the calculations and interpretation of the results.

The total budget for the 3-year period 2019-21 is EUR 5 099 671. This comprises EUR 4 356 230 of staff costs and EUR 743 441 of other costs.

The expected total number of participants throughout the duration of the programme is 13 000.

The cost per participant (EUR 392) was calculated by dividing the total budget for the 3 years (EUR 5 099 671) between the expected number of participants (13 000).

LT3: AIKOS open information, counselling and guidance system (AIKOS)

AIKOS is funded by the EU (through the ESF) and the national government. Nevertheless, it was not possible to obtain adequate data on costs. Annual staff costs (EUR 3 810) have been estimated by multiplying the average net monthly salary (EUR 635), by 12 months and the number of staff (0.5 FTE).

According to informants, data on the number of visitors and registered users exist but could not be provided to the researcher.

Due to missing information on the total costs and the number of participants, it has not been possible to estimate the cost per participant.

LT6: EURES (EURES *Lietuvoje*)

EURES provides information and counselling services to support mobility decisions in the EU, EEA countries and Switzerland. EURES is funded by the EU (through the ESF) (for establishment and development of the EURES system in the eligible countries) and the national government (for maintenance). It was not possible to access data on total costs. There are data on the amount allocated by the ESF and it was possible to estimate staff costs funded by the national government.

In the period 2014-20, the ESF contributed to the measure with EUR 160 144 63. It could be argued that around one quarter of this amount was spent in 2019. This corresponds to EUR 40 036.

Staff costs funded by the national government have been estimated based on data on the average salary and number of staff. Staff costs in 2019 (EUR 142 656) have been estimated by multiplying the average gross monthly salary of staff working on the measure (EUR 1 486), by 12 months and the number of staff (eight FTE). There is no information on other costs funded by the national government.

The total costs (EUR 182 692) have been estimated by adding staff costs from the national government (EUR 142 656) and the annual average of other costs funded by the ESF (EUR 40 036).

The cost per participant (EUR 18) was calculated by dividing the estimated total costs (EUR 182 692) between the approximate number of participants (10 000).

CHAPTER 4.

Analysis of unit costs

Cost per participant could potentially be a useful metric to compare the cost of similar services and measures within and across countries. However, comparison between different measures must be approached with caution. The overall aim of this chapter is to gain better understanding of unit costs in the context of their own characteristics in terms of measure type, scale, and scope, rather than a comparison between measures within and across countries.

In this section we present an analysis of unit costs according to the following variables:

- (a) typology of measures based on comprehensive examination of activities provided under each measure;
- (b) target groups and degree of intensity and length of support;
- (c) governance structure;
- (d) funding arrangements.

We begin by setting out some hypotheses and theoretical assumptions based on the initial literature reviewed and the patterns observed in the countries; this helps frame the analysis of unit costs across the measures for which cost data are available. This sub-section has various tables of information by measure type and by country. A full set of available data is provided in Annex 1.

4.1. Hypotheses and theoretical assumptions

The hypotheses and theoretical assumptions to frame our analysis of unit costs are that:

- (a) measures that are comprehensive in the number of activities they include are likely to have higher unit costs;
- (b) measures that target specific, vulnerable demographic user groups are likely to have higher unit costs;
- (c) measures that provide extended career/employment counselling services and are intensive in terms of the nature and level of support provided to participants are likely to have higher unit costs;
- (d) measures jointly funded by the ESF are likely to be relatively comprehensive in scope and target specific demographic user groups;
- (e) measures that are of short/limited activity are likely to have low unit costs per participant;

- (f) measures that are of short/limited activity are likely to offer a low level of intensity and support and have low unit costs.

4.2. Unit costs by measure type

In this section we provide an analysis of unit costs by measure type. The analysis is based on the typology of measures according to the range of activities covered. Though it is not possible directly to compare the unit cost of measures due to data limitations, certain differences and similarities can be observed across and within the measure types. It is important to reiterate that the tables and analysis do not constitute a comparative exercise as the costs included are considered as unique in each case and are not necessarily equivalent.

Table 16. Unit cost and level of intensity by measures

| Group/Measure | Unit costs | Level of intensity and length of support |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Type 1: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance | | |
| AT2 | INA | Low |
| AT4 | EUR 343 | Medium-high |
| EE1 | EUR 27 | Medium-high |
| EE2 | EUR 27 | Medium-high |
| EE3 | EUR 223 | High |
| LT3 | INA | Low |
| LT6 | EUR 18 | Low-medium |
| Type 2: Type 1 + skills assessments and/or VNFIL | | |
| BE3 | EUR 150 to EUR 1 195 (*) | High |
| Type 3: Type 2 + work experience or training | | |
| AT1 | EUR 620 | High |
| AT5 | EUR 1 874 | High |
| BE1 | EUR 550 | Medium-high |
| BE2 | EUR 283 | High |
| EE4 | EUR 1 193 | High |
| EE5 | EUR 83 | High |
| FR1 | INA | Medium-high |
| FR2 | EUR 649 | Medium-high |
| LT2 | EUR 392 | High |
| Type 4: Type 2 + work experience and training | | |
| EE6 | EUR 211 | High |
| FR4 | EUR 655 | Medium-high |
| LT1 | EUR 1 688 | High |

(*) EUR 150 (career guidance phase) to EUR 820 or EUR 1,195 (leading to certification)

Source: Cedefop.

4.2.1. Type 1 measures

Type 1: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance

Unit costs: AT2 (INA) AT4 (EUR 343), EE1 (EUR 27 per participation), EE2 (EUR 27 per participation), EE3 (EUR 223), LT3 (INA), LT6 (EUR 18)

No unit costs are available for AT2, LT3. These are national, universal measures, open to all adults. AT2 is a PES measure and offers initial career guidance information. LT3 falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education Science and Sports and offers basic job search information and assistance. Neither of these measures target any specific demographic user group. These measures are the least intensive in terms of the level and length of support provided of all Type 1 measures.

Measures EE1, EE2 and EE3 are short, and one-off or limited duration/activity. Though less comprehensive in the range of activities offered, EE2 and EE3 both target specific groups (EE2: the young, older workers, and other vulnerable groups; EE3: low-skilled employed, unemployed, people with disabilities). The difference between the unit costs for EE2 and EE3 is significant (EUR 27 and EUR 223 respectively). This might be explained by the fact that EE3 offers more intensive support through blends of short and extended consultation processes through coaching and mentoring activities compared to EE2. EE2 is a one-time workshop (lasting approximately 3 hours), whereas EE3 provides peer support through individual and/or group service provision lasting up to 10 hours.

Of the seven measures under Type 1, five are national PES measures (AT2, EE1, EE2, EE3, LT6); five also receive European funding (AT4, EE1, EE3, LT3, LT6). Of these, AT4, EE1, LT3, LT5 are universal measures; only one measure jointly funded by the ESF targets specific demographic groups (EE3).

4.2.2. Type 2 measures

Type 2: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance, skills assessments and/or VNFIL

Unit costs: BE3 (EUR 150 to EUR 820 or EUR 1 195)

BE3 is a universal measure for all adults and combines extended career counselling services with the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). The initial career guidance component of this measure ranges from EUR 150 to EUR 820 and can cost up to EUR 1 195 when the process includes VNFIL leading to certification. BE3 is funded by national government and the ESF. Participants may also be charged EUR 100 for the practical test. BE3 also involves the development of personalised plans and extensive career counselling.

4.2.3. Type 3 measures

Type 3: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance, skills assessments and/or VNFIL, work experience or training

Unit costs: AT1 (EUR 620), AT5 (EUR 1 874), BE1 (EUR 550), BE2 (EUR 283), EE4 (EUR 1 193), EE5 (EUR 83), FR1 (INA), FR2 (EUR 649), LT2 (EUR 392)

The unit cost of AT5 is EUR 1 874: this is the highest of all measures covered under the study. It offers extended and highly specialised career counselling services in addition to short-term work experience and skills audit for those with disabilities. The measure is managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and the nine provisional offices of the Federal Office for Social Affairs and Disability. The implementation of this measure is based on a partnership approach between 40 social service providers, the regional PES office, social insurance bodies, social partners, and enterprises. AT5 involves the development of personalised plans and extensive career counselling.

EE4 has a unit cost of EUR 1 193 and EE5 is EUR 83, the lowest in the study. Both measures involve intensive career counselling, with the main difference being that EE4 is more intensive in terms of overall duration. The measures are similar in their scope and governance structure. Both are managed by the PES, aimed at unemployed and employed individuals, and are outsourced to private and/or non-profit organisations. Both measures are funded by national government and ESF, with financial incentives being offered to individuals to support their participation in the measure.

FR2 has a unit cost of EUR 649 and is exclusively dedicated to disadvantaged young adults. The measure offers sustained support and comprehensive career counselling to facilitate progression into further learning or employment upon completion. FR2 is implemented at sub-national level and funded through several sources, including various EU funding streams, national government, sub-national government and local authorities.

It was not possible to identify unit costs for measure FR1. This is a large national measure with a budget of EUR 90 million, attracting funding from various sources, including national government, regional/local authorities and the ESF. It targets vulnerable groups and is implemented by a wide range of service providers.

Of the Type 3 measures, all except for AT5, FR1 and FR2 are with the PES. Of the PES measures, BE2, EE4, EE5 and LT2 are funded from national sources and the ESF.

Of the Type 3 measures, FR2 has the highest expenditure of almost EUR 720 million, followed by AT1 with a budget of EUR 103 million. These measures vary in the level of intensity and support, with AT1 offering more extended and

specialised career counselling processes, including short-term work experience and training opportunities for individuals.

It is difficult to identify any clear similarities or differences between the Type 3 measures to explain why their unit costs are so varied. Even by trying to identify commonalities between the activities they encompass, their level of intensity or groups targeted, it is difficult to draw key comparisons. In the case of measures in Belgium-Flanders, for instance, the unit cost of BE1 is EUR 550 and the unit cost for BE2 is EUR 283. These are both sub-national measures implemented by the PES. They cover the same activities, except that BE2 also involves training and outreach activities for service users, yet the unit cost is lower than BE1. This demonstrates the difficulty in accepting the estimated cost as valid or reliable.

4.2.4. Type 4 measures

Type 4: Outreach, provision of information, advice and/or guidance, skills assessments and/or VNFIL, work experience and training

Unit costs: EE6 (EUR 211), FR4 (EUR 655), LT1 (EUR 1 688)

Type 4 measures entail the most comprehensive offer of activities. EE6, FR4 and LT1 offer all activities under the scope of this study (though FR4 does not offer VNFIL) and so are considered as offering the most integrated service provision in relation to the activities explored and policy and service fields involved. All three measures aim to support the reintegration of people back into employment, with EE6 and LT1 also targeting vulnerable groups. Short-term work experience and some form of training (motivational training/basic skills training) aim to support people without employment to develop skills required in the labour market.

Of all the 20 measures for which cost data are available, measure LT1 has the second highest unit costs (EUR 1 688). Measure LT1 and EE6 are very similar in size, scope and overall objective, yet EE6 has a unit cost of EUR 211. Both measures offer intensive support (more intensive than FR4), and include extended, localised youth-based outreach activities to identify young people not in education and training (ELET). Young people are provided with specialist support services and offered a range of career development activities as part of them.

Certain differences between EE6 and LT1 could be identified in their governance structure and funding arrangements. EE6 is a sub-national measure and is only available in half of the regions across Estonia. It is funded by the ESF, national government, the regional authorities and is implemented by the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centre. LT1 is a national measure, also funded by the ESF and national government. The measure is implemented by the

Department of Youth Affairs (DYA) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

FR4 is a national PES measure and focuses on reintegrating those without employment into the labour market. It has a unit cost of EUR 655 and attracts funding from different sources, including national government and funds generated within the *Pôle Emploi*. The governance structure for FR4 differs from all the Type 4 measures insofar as it is based on a tripartite governance model between the national government, *Pôle Emploi* and the National Professional Union for Employment in Industry and Trade.

4.3. Unit costs according to target groups, intensity, and length of support

At a general level, and without knowing more about the contents and arrangements involved (online, individual or group activities), it could be expected that measures that offer a high level of support would have a higher cost per individual. Also, measures that target harder-to-reach or more vulnerable groups can be expected to be more expensive than universal or generic measures targeting the general adult population. Table 17 presents the cost per participant of each measure with information on the main target groups and the intensity and length of support each offers.

Table 17. Unit costs, target group and level of intensity and length of support

| Measure | Type | Unit cost | Target group | Intensity and length of support |
|---|------|-----------|----------------------|---|
| AT1: Guidance and counselling services on behalf of PES | 3 | EUR 620 | Unemployed, employed | High: After an information event and a personal interview, participants can choose between open career counselling at the premises of the provider organisation, in-depth single or group counselling, activating workshops and social activities. |
| AT2: Career counselling in Career information centres | 1 | INA | All adult population | Low: It may include single individual/group counselling sessions. |

| Measure | Type | Unit cost | Target group | Intensity and length of support |
|---|------|---|--|--|
| AT4: Educational guidance and counselling for adults | 1 | EUR 343 | All adult population | Medium-high: The first step is the consultation of information material or instructions on tools for own research. Further steps include the referral to external or internal counselling activities. |
| AT5: Work assistance for the disabled | 3 | EUR 1 874 | People with disabilities | High: All activities are tailored to the individual case. Support is given before and during job search as well as during the employee probationary period (up to 3 months). |
| BE1: Career guidance vouchers | 3 | EUR 550 | All employed persons, youth | Medium-high: Individual sessions guided by a career question and leading to a personal development plan. |
| BE2: Individual vocational training programme (IBO) | 3 | EUR 283 | Unemployed, people with disabilities, long-term unemployed | High: It involves individual career counselling, coaching and mentoring. Support is provided before and during the 1- to 6-month training period. |
| BE3: Validation of NFIL (PES) | 2 | EUR 150 (guidance phase) to EUR 820 or EUR 1 195 (leading to certification) | All adult population | High: Standard procedure adapted to the level of experience and the aspired qualification and includes extended consultation processes. |
| EE1: PES career counselling | 1 | EUR 27 per participation | All adult population, youth | Medium-high: It includes individual and group career counselling. |
| EE2: Job search training/workshop (PES) | 1 | EUR 27 per participation | Youth, older, people with disabilities, migrants/refugees | Medium-high: Group sessions providing information and support to persons looking for a first job opportunity and/or require more information about the labour market. |

| Measure | Type | Unit cost | Target group | Intensity and length of support |
|--|------|-----------|--|--|
| EE3: Peer coaching (PES) | 1 | EUR 223 | Unemployed/employed with disabilities or specific needs | High: Service provided by a career counsellor with a similar disability, illness or who are living with mental health issues. Individual or group sessions. |
| EE4: Coaching for working life (PES) | 3 | EUR 1 193 | Unemployed, employed. | High: Tailored to a group between 8 and 12 persons over an extended time period (between 40 to 80 days, 5-6 hours/day). |
| EE5: Job club (PES) | 3 | EUR 83 | Unemployed, employed | High: Group sessions (5-14 people). 8-16 sessions of 3 hours each. |
| EE6: Youth prop-up programme | 4 | EUR 211 | Unemployed, employed, jobseekers, NEETs and those at risk of becoming NEETs. | High: Localised youth outreach activities conducted by professional youth workers. Individual and group activities. |
| FR1: Advice in professional evolution | 3 | INA | Employed, unemployed, young people | Medium-high: The offer of services is adapted to the situation and project of the individual. |
| FR2: Mission locales: | 3 | EUR 649 | Young people, particularly targeting NEETs, low-qualified and those in emergency situations. | Medium-high: Variety of individual and group activities tailored to the needs of the individual. Global support. |
| FR4: Career support provided by the Job Centre | 4 | EUR 655 | Unemployed. | Medium-high: Individuals classified as requiring further support can engage in individual meetings with career advisors. |
| LT1: Let's move (YG) | 4 | EUR 1 688 | Young people who are NEETs or at risk of becoming NEETs. | High: Extended outreach (including street and mobile youth work) and wide range of activities to support the target user group. |
| LT2: Enhancing youth social competences (YG) | 3 | EUR 392 | Unemployed, young people | High: Project activities are individualised (some held in groups). It includes a wide range of activities to support the target group. |

| Measure | Type | Unit cost | Target group | Intensity and length of support |
|--|------|-----------|----------------------|---|
| LT3: AIKOS open information, counselling and guidance system | 1 | INA | All adult population | Low: It is a website providing information to a large audience. Visitors to the site can request information and guidance through the live chat, email or Skype but it is not clear how much these options are used. |
| LT6: EURES | 1 | EUR 18 | All adult population | Low-medium: It allows for individual consultations. Duration is likely to be short and has a specific focus (mobility of workers). |

Source: Cedefop:

It is apparent that the most intensive measures (marked as high) tend to have higher unit costs than those that are less intensive (marked as low), though this is not always consistent and varies by measure type. For instance, for measures that fall into the high level of intensity category, values range from two-digit unit costs of EUR 83 for EE3 (Type 3 measure), to almost EUR 2 000 for LT1 with a unit cost of EUR 1 688 (Type 4 measure), and to AT5 with a unit cost of EUR 1 874 (Type 3 measure). Measures that fall into the medium-high level of intensity category can vary from EUR 27 for EE1 and EE2 (both Type 1 measures) to FR4 with a unit cost of EUR 655 (Type 4 measure).

A closer look at the measures reveals that those which comprise only individual sessions (BE1, BE2) have higher unit costs than measures which involve group career counselling (EE1, EE2). For instance, the Belgium-Flanders measures offering career guidance vouchers (BE1) involve a cost of EUR 550 for four 1-hour individual sessions, which corresponds to EUR 137.50 per session; the career counselling and the job search training/workshop provided by the Estonian PES, which involves group sessions, have an estimated unit cost of EUR 27.

For measures that target vulnerable groups (AT5, BE1, BE2, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE6, FR1, FR2, LT1, LT2), the above trends are less clear. Data are not very revealing on the relationship between the intensity and length of the measure and the costs, especially as a full analysis is required considering all relevant variables in the career guidance process and the benefits and outcomes at different levels (social, individual) in relation to the costs. Individualisation still appears to be a key factor determining cost. The two most expensive measures targeting specific vulnerable groups (AT5, LT1) are highly individualised and the level of intensity

and length of support provided is high, yet they vary by measure type. AT5 is classified as a Type 3 measure while LT1 is categorised as a Type 4 measure. AT5 involves support and career counselling and opportunities for short-term work experience for people with disabilities to obtain or secure a job or training place. The Lithuanian measure Let's move (LT1) includes street and mobile work with young NEETs.

The costs of the Estonian PES measures Career counselling (EE1) and Job search training workshops (EE2) which involves group sessions only, are the lowest for measures that target vulnerable user groups. Other Type 1 measures targeting vulnerable groups include measure EE3 that offers peer coaching for people with disabilities. Job search assistance and career counselling for vulnerable user groups at an early stage would logically help avoid diminishing job prospects as the unemployment spell lengthens.

4.4. Unit costs by governance structure

This section examines unit costs by governance structure. The information is summarised in Table 17 and includes responsible entity, level of implementation, entity in charge of implementation and stakeholders. In this table we also include details on target user groups and funding sources by measure. The analysis addresses part of research question three that is specific to stakeholders: what are the mechanisms for financing the measures under study and in which stakeholders are involved?

Table 18 shows that the PES is responsible for 12 out of the 20 measures for which cost data are available (AT1, AT2, BE1, BE2, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, FR4, LT2, LT6). For one measure (BE3) responsibility for the measure is shared between the PES and the regional government. For the remaining measures (AT4, AT5, EE6, FR1, LT1, LT3) responsibility is at ministry level, with some measures falling under one main policy field (education: AT4, LT3; social security and labour: LT1; health and social care: AT5). FR2 falls under the responsibility of various ministries. Though data availability is limited, measures that fall directly under the responsibility of a dedicated Ministry (AT4, AT5, LT1) have relatively high unit costs compared to measures with other governance arrangements. It is also important to consider that higher costs need to be seen in a wider context of advantages and drawbacks of the different options for governance arrangements, such as in terms of coherence, coordination, transparency, and adequate use of funding.

Information on unit costs is missing for AT2, LT3 and FR1. This may be because provision of the service is decentralised to a variety of providers at regional or local level, especially for AT2 and FR1. Where information is available

on unit costs, it is apparent from Table 18 that measures involving several different stakeholders have relatively high unit costs and may be explained by the type of demographic user groups targeted by the measure. For instance, AT5 provides support to people with disabilities and involves specialist providers across a range of policy fields. This measure has a unit cost of EUR 1 874. Similarly, LT1 has a unit cost of EUR 1 688 and involves several stakeholders, including Open Youth centres, Social Action, other public institutions, and NGOs. This measure is aimed at people who are unemployed and young people that are NEET or at risk of early school leaving.

Less apparent from the information available, but not less important, is the relationship and social dialogue between the entities responsible for the overall management of the measure, those in charge of implementation, and the arrangements between stakeholders involved. Table 18 shows that, in the case of AT1, EE6, FR1 and FR2, local authorities are involved in the implementation and/or funding of the measures. It is not clear from the data the extent to which local authorities have greater/lesser degrees of autonomy than other stakeholders involved and in what capacity.

Table 18. Measures by governance structure and funding source

| Measure | Unit cost | Target group | Responsible entity | Governance structure | | | Funding source |
|---|-----------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | | Level of implementation | Entity in charge of implementation | Stakeholders | |
| AT1: Guidance and counselling services on behalf of PES | EUR 620 | Unemployed, employed | PES | National | Care and career counselling organisation | Regional PES offices, for-profit providers | National government, local authorities |
| AT2: Career counselling in career information centres | INA | All adult population | PES | National | Career information centres (72) | INA | National government |
| AT4: Educational guidance and counselling for adults | EUR 343 | All adult population | Ministry of Education | National | Network Initiative Education Guidance; Educational Guidance Burgenland | Care providers (30); network partners | ESF, National government, regional authorities |
| AT5: Work assistance for the disabled | EUR 1 874 | People with disabilities | Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care & Consumer Protection | National | Social services providers (40) | Nine provincial offices of the Federal Office for Social Affairs and Disability, regional PES offices, social Insurance bodies, social partners, enterprises | National government |
| BE1: Career guidance vouchers | EUR 550 | Employed, the young | PES | Sub-national | PES Flanders VDBA | EDENRED (Pay-out Authority), career centres | Sub-national authorities |

| Measure | Unit cost | Target group | Responsible entity | Governance structure | | | Funding source |
|---|---|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | | | Level of implementation | Entity in charge of implementation | Stakeholders | |
| BE2: Individual vocational training programme (IBO) | EUR 283 | Unemployed, people with disabilities, long term unemployed | PES | Sub-national | PES Flanders VDAB | Private partner organisations, social assistance offices (OCMV's), employers | ESF, Sub national authorities, employers |
| BE3: Validation of NFIL (PES) | EUR 150 to EUR 820 or EUR 1 195 ⁽¹⁴⁾ | All adult population | PES, regional government | Sub-national | PES Flanders VDAB | Assessment centres, social partners | ESF, National government, contribution from participants |
| EE1: PES career counselling | EUR 27 (per participation) | All adult population, youth | PES | National | Unemployment Insurance Fund personnel | Schools, employers, youth centres, International House of Estonia | ESF, National government |
| EE2: Job search training/ workshop (PES) | EUR 27 (per participation) | Youth, older people, people with disabilities, migrants/refugees | PES | National | Unemployment Insurance Fund personnel | Schools, employers, youth centres, International House of Estonia | National Government |
| EE3: Peer coaching (PES) | EUR 223 | Unemployed/employed with disabilities or specific needs. | PES | National | Unemployment Insurance Fund personnel | Outsourced to multiple partners (39), who receive funding from Estonian Unemployment Fund. | ESF, National government |

⁽¹⁴⁾ EUR 150 (guidance phase) to EUR 820 or EUR 1 195 (leading to certification)

| Measure | Unit cost | Target group | Governance structure | | | | Funding source |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | | Responsible entity | Level of implementation | Entity in charge of implementation | Stakeholders | |
| EE4: Coaching for working life (PES) | EUR 1 193 | Unemployed, employed. | PES | National | Unemployment Insurance Fund personnel | Outsourced to NGOs or provide enterprises who also engage other partners e.g. employers, vocational schools | ESF, National government |
| EE5: Job club (PES) | EUR 83 | Unemployed, employed | PES | National | Unemployment Insurance Fund personnel | Outsourced to NGOs or provide enterprises who also engage other partners e.g. employers, vocational schools | ESF, National government |
| EE6: Youth prop-up programme | EUR 211 | Unemployed, employed, jobseekers, NEETs and those at risk of becoming NEETs. | Association of Estonian Open Youth Centre | Sub-national | Association of Estonian Open Youth Centre | The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, Youth centres, pathfinder centres, local municipalities | ESF, National government, regional authorities |
| FR1: Advice in professional evolution | INA | Employed, unemployed, young people | Various ministries | National | Various : e.g. Job Centre <i>Pôle emploi</i> , APEC, Missions locales, Cap Emploi, OPACIF | 15 regional operators including social partners and private providers | ESF, National government, regional authorities, local authorities |

| Measure | Unit cost | Target group | Governance structure | | | | Funding source |
|--|-----------|--|---|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | | Responsible entity | Level of implementation | Entity in charge of implementation | Stakeholders | |
| FR2: Mission locales: | EUR 649 | Young people, particularly targeting NEETs, low-qualified and those in emergency situations. | National/regional government | Sub-national | <i>Mission locales</i> | Other relevant services and institutions including <i>Pôle emploi</i> | EU (various sources), National government, sub-national authorities, local authorities |
| FR4: Career support provided by the Job Centre | EUR 655 | Unemployed. | PES | National | <i>Pôle emploi</i> | <i>Mission locales</i> | National government, National Professional Union for Employment in Industry and Trade |
| LT1: Let's move (YG) | EUR 1 688 | Unemployed, young people who are NEETs or at risk of becoming NEETs. | Ministry of Social Security and Labour | National | Department of Youth Affairs | Several partners including open youth centres, Social Action, other public institutions and NGOs | ESF, National government |
| LT2: Enhancing youth social competences (YG) | EUR 392 | Unemployed, young people | PES | National | Employment service | No official partners | ESF, National government |
| LT3: AIKOS open information, counselling and guidance system | INA | All adult population | Ministry of Education, Sports & Science | National | National Education Agency | None specified | ESF, National government |

| Measure | Unit cost | Target group | Responsible entity | Governance structure | | | Funding source |
|------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| | | | | Level of implementation | Entity in charge of implementation | Stakeholders | |
| LT6: EURES | EUR 18 | All adult population | PES | National | Employment service | Outreach partners: Solvit, Europass, Lithuanian diaspora communities. | ESF, National government |

Source: Cedefop.

4.5. Unit costs by funding arrangements

This section provides an analysis of the unit costs of measures according to their funding arrangements. The section begins with an overview of the different funding sources, followed by a discussion on the budget mechanisms used to allocate funding by measure. The section then considers the sustainability of the funding sources and provides a brief analysis of the funding arrangements of the measures by country.

4.5.1. Funding source

Across and within countries, measures are funded by a range of different sources. These sources do not apply to countries as a whole, but vary measure by measure, and often overlapping. For instance, there are only five measures that rely solely on public funding from national sources (AT1, AT2, AT5, BE1, EE2). All other measures rely on public funding combined with other funding sources. The main funding sources identified are:

- (a) public funding from national sources with allocations from one or a combination of national, sub-national, local level contributions: AT1, AT2, AT5, BE1, EE2;
- (b) mix of EU funding and public funding from national sources: AT4, BE3, EE1, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR1, FR2, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT6;
- (c) mix of EU funding, public and private sector funding: BE2;
- (d) mix of public and private sector funding: FR4;
- (e) fees charged to individual learners: BE3.

Of the five measures that receive public funding from national sources, AT1, AT2, AT5 and EE2 receive national funding. AT1 also refers to the use of local public funding. BE1 is funded at sub-national level.

Of the 20 measures for which cost data are available, 13 are funded by a mix of public funds from national sources combined with EU funding: these are mainly ESF (AT4, BE3, EE1, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR1, FR2, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT6). Of these measures, AT4, EE6, FR1 and FR2, also refer to the use of regional public funding. Two measures also refer to the use of local public funding (FR1, FR2). Measure BE2 has a mix of EU public and private sector funding. The number of measures receiving EU funding varies within and across Member States, by measure type and demographic groups targeted.

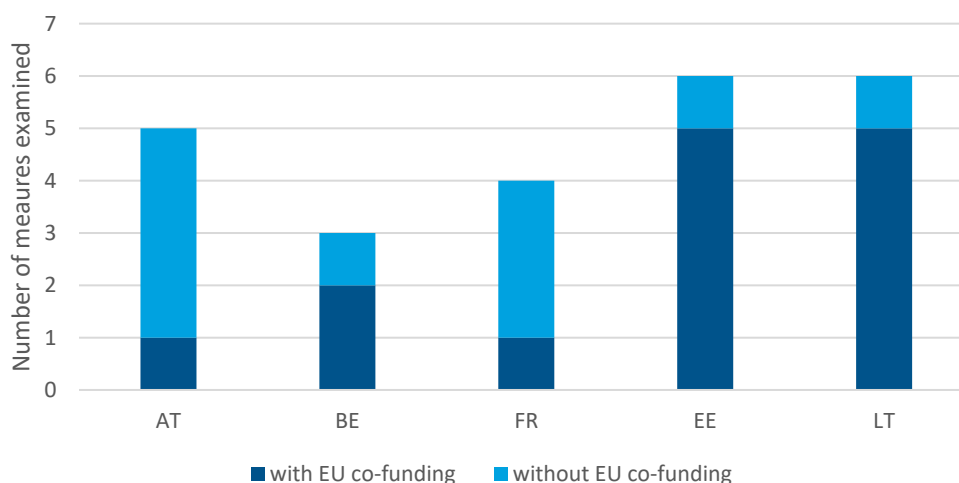
Of the 14 measures receiving European funding:

- (a) eight measures are managed by the PES (BE2, BE3, EE1, EE3, EE4, EE5, LT2, LT6);

- (b) seven measures target vulnerable demographic groups (BE2, EE3, EE6, FR1, FR2, LTI, LT2);
- (c) the number of measures is marginally higher for Type 1 and 2 measures compared to Type 3 and 4 measures;
- (d) The level of intensity and length of support offered is typically high to medium.

Figure 1 shows that the proportion of measures using EU joint funding varies within and between Member States. Of the measures for which cost data are available, one in four in AT receive joint funding (AT4). Two of the three measures for Belgium-Flanders receive EU joint funding, as do one in three in France. Most measures in Estonia and all measures in Lithuania are jointly funded by the ESF. This suggests that EU policies and funds are an important driver for the diffusion of services and measures aimed at supporting career development and learning activities of adults across the Member States.

Figure 1. **Measures with/without EU joint funding across countries**



Source: Cedefop.

Only two measures receive funding contributions from the private sector (BE2, FR4). In the case of BE2, employers pay between EUR 650 to 1 400 per person to use IBO (per person per month, as a share of the salary). The employer contribution is paid to VDAB and used to (partially) recover the unemployment benefits. Jobseekers in IBO receive a bonus payment on top of their normal unemployment benefits, as an incentive to participate in the measure. In the case of FR4, the *Pôle Emploi* also receives funding from the National Professional Union for Employment in Industry and Trade (*Nationale Interprofessionnelle pour l'Emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce, UNEDIC*) to cover unemployment benefits

(*assurance chômage*). The *Pôle Emploi* also receives other funding for earmarked programmes, though no further details are available.

In a few cases individuals are required to pay a contribution towards participation in the measure. For measure BE3, a small fee is asked from candidates for the assessment component of the measure if they are currently in employment. However, there is also a lack of general clarity regarding costs per participant, in the sense that, with the exception of BE3, there is no indication of whether these costs are covered by the State or by the participants themselves, or whether both the State and participants fund the measure.

4.5.2. Funding mechanism

Funding is allocated to the measures using different mechanisms:

- (a) Purpose-/measure-specific funding: AT1, AT4, AT5, BE3, FR1, LT1;
- (b) no earmarked funding: AT2, LT6;
- (c) demand driven mechanism with vouchers: BE1;
- (d) lump-sum for full operational costs of service provider: BE2, EE3;
- (e) combination of lump-sum for full operational costs of service provider and, purpose-/measure-specific funding: EE1, EE2, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR2, FR4;
- (f) performance-based funding: LT3.
- (g) Information on funding mechanisms is unknown for LT2.

The six measures that receive purpose-/measure-specific funding rely on public funds from national sources. Measures AT4, BE3, FR1 and LT1 are also joint funded by the ESF. These measures have medium-high unit costs per person and are a combination of different measures by type: AT4 (EUR 343) Type 1; BE3 (up to EUR 1 195) Type 2; FR1 (unknown), Type 3; LT1 (EUR 1 688) Type 4.

In the case of AT2 and LT6, there is no earmarked funding for the measures, which implies that providers use existing 'other' budgets to cover the cost of the measures. In the case of AT2, unit costs are unknown. This is a Type 1 measure where the level of intensity and length of support of the measure are low. The unit cost of LT6 (EUR 18) is the lowest of all measures examined under assignment 1 and is also a Type 1 measure with a low-medium level of intensity and support.

The most common funding mechanism is a combination of lump-sum for full operational costs of service provider and, purpose-/measure-specific funding. This approach is used in Estonia for all six measures and for two of the three measures in France examined. However, it is difficult to identify any correlation between the type of funding mechanism used, unit costs, measure type or level of intensity and support offered. For instance, unit costs for measures in Estonia range from EUR 27 (EE1, EE2, Type 1 measures), to EUR 211 (EE6, Type 4 measure) and EUR 1 193 (EE4, Type 3 measure), and vary in their level of intensity and support.

In France, FR2 and FR4 have similar unit costs (EUR 649 and EUR 655 respectively) and both offer a medium-high level of intensity and support. FR2 is a Type 3 measure and FR4 is a Type 4 measure.

LT3 is the only measure where funding is allocated based on performance. This is a Type 1 measure aimed at providing web-based information and career guidance material to a wide range of user groups. The unit cost for this measure is unknown.

4.5.3. Sustainability of funding

The way in which the measures were financed varies within and across countries. Budget allocations can be for annual, multi-annual, project-based/time-limited budget allocations or a combination of different budgets depending on the funding source. Budget allocations for the measures at the time of data collection were made on the following basis:

- (a) annual budget: AT2, BE1, BE2, BE3, EE2, EE4, EE5, FR1, FR2, FR4, LT3, LT6;
- (b) annual budget and multi-annual budget: AT1, EE1;
- (c) annual budget and project-based/time-limited: AT5, EE3;
- (d) multi-annual budget: AT4;
- (e) project-based/time-limited: EE6, LT1, LT2.

Of the 20 measures, 12 were funded annually. Though it was not possible to identify any clear relationship between the unit cost and form of budget allocation, many of these measures were from PES (AT2, BE1, BE2, BE3, EE2, EE4, EE5, FR4).

Measures AT1 and EE1 are from PES and featured an annual budget combined with a multi-annual budget. These measures are supported by different funding sources. For AT1, a multi-annual budget (of up to 3 years) was possible; this was subject to long term planning of the PES and existing (long-standing) cooperation between PES and the service providers (*Beratung durch Betreuungseinrichtungen*). In the case of EE1, ESF funding was generally allocated on a multi-annual basis and then distributed year-by-year; the PES budget was allocated on an annual basis.

Measures that are partially or fully funded based and project-based/time-limited include AT5, EE3, EE6, LT1, LT2. These measures range from Type 1 to Type 4, but all offer a high level of intensity and career support and were aimed at vulnerable target user groups, including young people at risk of early school leaving (ELET) and those with disabilities. The unit costs for these measures also vary, with AT5 (EUR 1 874) and LT1 (EUR 1 688) having the highest unit costs of all measures examined. Of these measures EU funding is used alongside national

public sources to support the implementation of EE3, EE6, LT1, LT2. Measures financed in this way raise sustainability issues and can lead to a focus on short-term results over stable and consistent funding offering security to the target users.

4.5.4. Financial incentives

Several measures offer financing to cover the cost of meals and travel, with some also offering financial support as part of a wider system of social protection, including housing allowances and social assistance. Measures offering some form of financial incentive include EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR1, LT1, LT2. Though it is not possible to identify a pattern between these and their unit costs, all measures except for FR1 are managed by the PES and are mostly aimed at vulnerable demographic user groups (the exception, EE4, is aimed at the unemployed and employed only).

While the costs of these incentives to national governments are unknown, it is likely the costs to enable participation in the measure are outweighed by the costs associated with prolonged periods of unemployment and personal costs associated with the health and wellbeing of participants.

4.5.5. Funding arrangements by country

In this section we provide a brief overview of the funding arrangements by country covered under the scope of the study.

Austria

In Austria, funding is mainly allocated to the measures through purpose-/measure-specific funding, except for measure AT2 where there is no earmarked funding. The funding of measures tends to be based on annual budgets. This is the case for AT1, AT2, AT3 and AT5. AT1 is also based on a multi-annual budget and measure AT5 is project-based/time-limited. Funding of measure AT4 is based on multi-annual budgets. For this measure, the allocation of national and ESF funding differs across the regional networks and service providers involved in the measure.

Measure AT5 has the highest unit cost of all five measures examined in Austria (EUR 1 874). Several partners are involved in the implementation of this measure, including specialist service providers in health, housing and social care. The Federal Office for Social Affairs and Disability published a call for a 4- to 5-year framework contract whereby successful service providers could apply for annual funding based on expected demand and estimated costs.

Belgium-Flanders

In Belgium-Flanders, all three measures examined are PES, implemented on a sub-national level and funded through annual budgets. There are no clear or consistent links between the unit cost of any of the three measures, and their governance structures, funding source or funding mechanism. For measure BE1, beneficiaries are required to pay a contribution of EUR 80 towards the cost of the career counselling that takes place in one of 250 dedicated career centres across Flanders.

Estonia

In Estonia, of the five PES measures (EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5), the unit cost of the measures outsourced to various service providers (EE3, EE4, EE5) is higher than the unit cost of measures implemented by the PES in cooperation with local partners such as schools, employers and, youth centres, (EE1, EE2). All measures offered a financial incentive to enable participation, though the cost of the incentives and their effectiveness is unknown.

A mix of different mechanisms were used to allocate funds across all six measures. Differences in the funding mechanisms and sustainability of funding (how the measure is budgeted) are likely to depend on the funding source. Certain information on the mechanism used to allocate funding by different funding sources is available for specific measures only. For EE1, ESF funding is generally allocated on a multi-annual basis and then further distributed year-by-year. The PES budget is allocated annually based on previous year results and estimated number/type of prospective participants (e.g. based on unemployment rates and the size of the target groups).

For all six measures, public funds are allocated through a lump sum for all operational costs of the service provider. For measures EE1, EE2, EE4, EE5 and EE6, funding is also allocated through purpose-/measure-specific funding. Of these measures, EE1, EE4, EE5 and EE6 are jointly funded by the ESF. For EE1, ESF funding is generally allocated on a multi-annual basis and then further distributed year-by-year. For measures EE4 and EE5, ESF funding was allocated on a purpose-/measure-specific basis. National funding was allocated to cover the services needed, with the sums paid to service providers for full operational costs. EE3 is also jointly funded by the ESF but the mechanism for the allocation by funding sources is unknown.

France

For France, the measures for which cost data are available include FR1, FR2 and FR4. For all the measures studied under assignment 1, which are funded based on annual budgets, the funding sources and mechanisms for allocation seem more complex. For FR1 and FR2, these measures were jointly funded by a minimum of four different sources, with different mechanisms for allocation. FR1 was funded by the ESF, National government, regional authorities, and local authorities. Funding allocation was purpose-/measure-specific, though it is not clear if funding was allocated this way by each of the different sources.

Unit costs are not known for FR1, but FR2 and FR4 have relatively high unit costs across all measures (EUR 649 and EUR 655 respectively). They were funded by various sources and allocated as lump-sum for full operational costs of service provider and purpose-/measure-specific funding. For FR2, it was reported that negotiations through the multi-annual conventions may have an element of performance-based funding following a recommendation from an evaluation of the measure carried out in 2016 by the IGAS (IGAS, 2016), which indicated that some funding should be allocated according to performance. No further information is available regarding this proposal.

Lithuania

In Lithuania, all measures examined are Jointly funded by the ESF. Measures LT1 and LT2 offer financial incentives to enable participation. These are both Youth Guarantee measures and were funded as project-based, time-limited. Funding was purpose-/measure-specific. The unit cost for LT1 is the second highest of all measures (EUR 1 688). It is aimed at young people and there are several partners involved in its implementation. By comparison, measure LT6 has one of the lowest unit costs of all those examined, involving a range of different partners in outreach activities. There is no earmarked funding for this measure.

Measure LT3 is the only measure where funding is performance-based. Unit costs for this measure are unknown.

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusions

5.1. Understanding cost and data availability

This volume presents an exploration of one or two pieces of the puzzle in relation to methodologies and data for building evidence on the outcomes or results of lifelong guidance. It is limited to example findings on inputs (costs) and outputs (participation in a measure) and it does not address impacts and outcomes. Other Cedefop volumes (Cedefop et al. 2022 and Cedefop, 2023) deal with the latter issues, helping build knowledge and evidence to apply to developing comprehensive quality (assurance) frameworks in the field of lifelong guidance to benefit the public. The research for this report showed that obtaining and analysing adequate cost data on career guidance related activities poses a lot of challenges not easy to overcome. The data collected enabled the estimation of the total costs of 18 out of 20 measures first selected for analysis, but accuracy and comparability of the data are limited. Total costs cannot be directly compared between measures or across countries as they refer to measures with different characteristics and activities, different numbers of participants and cover different time periods.

Data on staff and other costs were available for around one third of the measures investigated. Of the 20 measures for which cost data are available, information on total 'other costs' is unknown for 14 measures and information on total 'staff costs' is unknown for 12 measures. These data cannot be directly compared across measures for the same reasons as the total costs. Also, the costs covered under 'other costs' (e.g. property cost, stationery, overhead costs, staff training, etc.) vary significantly across measures, though it was possible in some cases to identify certain costs that are/are not included in the overall cost of the measures. This provides some indication of what components are included in total costs, but those such as property costs, building use, other service-related expenditure and overhead costs are not consistently included in total cost calculations, which makes comparison complicated.

Further detailed information on staff (e.g. career practitioners, case management staff, employment counsellors or related staff, such as job placement officers) training costs would have been very useful to understand the level of investment going into quality provisions and professionalism, as well as which services are working together. Staff costs in the measures included are generally the bulk of expenditure. The data collected do not allow to break down what these

staff costs exactly relate to; it is possible to assume they may exclusively cover wages.

It is possible to conclude that the data gathered and analysed show that cost structures are not that comparable across the measures reviewed.

5.1.1. Unit cost and integrated measures

Our analysis has focused on the unit costs of measures, noting differences in data availability for different countries as well as differences in geographic and economic factors. It has been possible to estimate the cost per participant (or participation) for 17 measures. The comparative analysis of unit costs has considered the measures by type, target user groups, level of intensity and length of the intervention, and by governance structures and funding arrangements. Although there are some indications that more intensive and longer measures are costlier, differences are not consistent and limitations on data availability make comparison challenging. It was also not possible to prove that unit costs would be higher in measures targeting vulnerable demographic user groups.

While it can be observed that measures that include a comprehensive set of activities and are the most intensive tend to have higher unit costs than those that are less comprehensive and intensive, this is not always consistent and varies by measure type. Those with a low number of activities (only provision of information, advice and/or career guidance) seem to have lower costs, as might be expected. However, there are no clear patterns.

The level of integration of the activities in the measures is not always easy to assess. Our attempt to classify the measures into four types including different activities allow for an approximation of the level of integration. The most integrated measures include pre-entry activities, entry, ongoing and pre-exit follow-up: these can be found in the case of EE6 and LT1. The research has shown that the unit costs even for the most integrated measures can vary significantly. LT1 has a unit cost of EUR 1 688, compared to EE6 that has a unit cost of EUR 211, yet the measures are very similar in scope, overall objective and demographic groups they target. In other cases, it is easy to see the differences of unit cost based on the nature of the measures. For example, unit cost per participant varies from EUR 18 in LT6 to EUR 1 874 in AT5. This can be easily explained: LT6 is a large universal measure primarily offering web-based career information, whereas AT5 offers extensive career counselling to support people with disabilities secure a training position or employment and involves specialist service providers.

In the 20 measures reviewed it is difficult to explain the broad divergences in unit costs between measure types and level of intensity: cost might differ

considerably despite measures being similar in size, scope and structure even where country economic differences are accounted for.

More in-depth research is needed to understand these divergences, particularly considering the integrative nature of lifelong guidance. Calculating the cost of each individual activity would help in a better understanding of the composition of cost. However, in this research it was only possible to identify the cost of individual activities in BE3.

5.2. Understanding financing mechanisms and stakeholders involved

Of the 20 measures for which cost data are available, 14 are funded by a mix of public funds from national sources combined with EU funding, mainly ESF (AT4, BE2, BE3, EE1, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, FR1, FR2, LT1, LT2, LT3, LT6). There is a general lack of clarity regarding costs per participant (or participation), in the sense that, except for BE3, there is no indication of whether the costs identified are covered by public funds or by the participants themselves, or whether there is cost-sharing where beneficiaries also contribute by paying fees or other elements.

The most common funding mechanism is a combination of lump-sum for full operational costs of service provider; purpose-/measure-specific funding is widely used across all measures in Estonia and majority of measures in France. A performance-based funding mechanism applies to LT3 only. In terms of sustainability, 12 of the 20 measures receive annual budgets.

Only certain commonalities can be identified for the stakeholders involved. Measures that are outsourced to a range of service providers tend to have high unit costs. From a cost accounting perspective, a key issue related to outsourcing of the measure/activities is that this has led to a type of service fragmentation where staff and other costs are collected by individual providers and not always captured in a centralised management system for easy data collection and monitoring. The challenge of trying to determine real unit costs of such services are further complicated by the high level of cross-subsidisation of lifelong guidance services, rigid budget headlines that do not correspond to the overall objectives of the measures, and resistance from institutions to provide detailed data on costs.

Differences in the availability of other costs and staff costs, together with a lack of clarity in funding structures and accounting, complicate the understanding of investment decisions and the rationale behind them.

5.3. Way forward

Understanding cost and estimating unit costs of career guidance and integrated measures is important in building systematic evidence-informed approaches for monitoring and evaluation that can be used with frameworks for quality assurance and continuous improvement. There is still work to be done and lessons learned to build upon. Volume I (Cedefop, 2022) and Volume II (Cedefop, 2023) of this series have shown that key challenges in linking data on input and processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, include lack of systemic approaches that work within and across sectors, lack of adequate indicators, and shortcomings of adequate evaluations in this area, particularly the lack of counterfactual measurement or equivalent methods. Volume III has further shown that variations in the methodological approaches to determining unit costs and data limitations indicate that this can contribute to difficulties associated with identifying the benefits of career development support in relation to unit costs. In many instances, costs are not clearly differentiated, and it is not possible to identify specific costs of individual activities. To some degree this is understandable, considering the integrative nature of career guidance and holistic design of activities supporting career development for better results⁽¹⁵⁾. Drawing definitive conclusions about effectiveness of a measure relates to more than individual or other outcomes, as we need to see career guidance in a wider context. Finally, many activities and measures can be integrated with career guidance; this varies depending on the clients' needs and their readiness to make use of self-help services, such as in terms of employability skills and life situation, and available information, as well as the quality of such provisions. In addition, cost included (or not) to compute total cost might also differ considerably, making it complicated to establish a proper understanding of overall cost. These different limitations pose challenges in studying and drawing any future conclusions on efficiency and, particularly, effectiveness. Linked to the general lack of adequate cross-sectoral outcome and impact indicators for monitoring the expected results of career guidance processes (see Cedefop et al., 2022 and Cedefop, 2023), the lack of robust data on cost poses challenges in using evidence for service and overall system improvements.

There is a need to explore ways of making cost more transparent and reflective of the agreed aims and expected outcomes related to individual

⁽¹⁵⁾ Percy and Hughes (in Cedefop et al., 2022) argue that 'disentangling guidance from jointly located activities may even be an inappropriate way of understanding the benefits of holistic programmes, where such activities might include informal or formal training, job search/application assistance, health support, workplace reintegration assistance, and financial incentives (whether for jobseeker, support provider, or employer)'.

experiences with career guidance and activities supporting career development (Vuorinen and Kettunen, 2022, Table 2) For example, reliable information on professional staff training expenditure would be beneficial. Better structured data collection will create more robust evidence that, in turn, should facilitate continuous lifelong guidance system improvements across education, training and wider labour market contexts. It is important, however, that this evidence is built in consultation with stakeholders, including practitioners as well as researchers and experts in the field. National lifelong guidance forums can aid this process. Building consensus on what costs are (or not) included in total cost and finding common ways of accounting for cost across countries in different measures would also make peer learning possible at European level.

Understanding costs associated with lifelong guidance activities and integrated career support measures is important in consolidating methodologies for monitoring and evaluation across sectors and in client-facing services, in provider organisations and regions. This can help in obtaining an overview on the results of lifelong guidance in a country and where progress is needed. Measures on lifelong guidance systems inputs such as costs, combined with well contextualised information on output, processes, outcome and impact, will provide opportunities for using robust indicators in frameworks for quality assurance and other tools for continuous improvement of guidance provisions.

Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| AT | Austria |
| BE | Belgium-Flanders |
| EE | Estonia |
| FR | France |
| FTE | full-time equivalent |
| INA | information not available |
| LT | Lithuania |
| M&E | monitoring and evaluating |
| PES | public employment services |
| ToR | terms of reference |
| VET | vocational education and training |
| VNFIL | validation of non-formal and informal learning |

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Annex 1. Data tables by measure type

A1.1. Type 1 measures

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure / budget) ¹ | Staff costs | Other costs | Cost per participant | Level of implementation | Responsible entity | Target group | Funding source | Intensity / length of support | Output data | Outcome data |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Type 1 measures | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| AT2 | 2019 | INA | EUR 731 000 (exp.) | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | INA | National | PES | Universal measure, All adult population | National government | Level 1 | ✓ | ✓ |
| AT4 | 2018 | EUR 788 900 (budget) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total other costs | EUR 343 | National | Ministry of Education | Universal measure, All adult population | ESF, National government, regional authorities | Level 3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| EE1 | 2019 | EUR 1 687 882 (exp.) | EUR 1 330 369 | EUR 357 513 | EUR 27 (per participation) | National | PES | Universal measure, All adult population | ESF, National government | Level 3 | ✓ | x |
| EE2 | 2019 | EUR 355 451 (exp.) | EUR 348 085 | EUR 7 365 | EUR 27 (per participation) | National | PES | The young, older persons, people with disabilities, migrants/refugees | National Government | Level 3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| EE3 | 2019 | EUR 79 963 (exp.) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but included in total other costs | EUR 223 | National | PES | Unemployed, employed, people with disabilities | ESF, National government | Level 4 | ✓ | x |
| LT3 | 2019 | INA | EUR 3,810 (exp.) | INA | INA | National | Ministry of Education, Science and Sports | Universal measure All adult population | ESF, National government | Level 1 | ✓ | x |

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure / budget) ¹ | Staff costs | Other costs | Cost per participant | Level of implementation | Responsible entity | Target group | Funding source | Intensity / length of support | Output data | Outcome data |
|---------|-------------------|---|-------------|--|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| LT6 | 2019 | EUR 182,692 (exp.) | EUR 142,656 | Sum unknown but certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 18 | National | PES | Universal measure, All adult population | ESF, National government | Level 2 | ✓ | x |

Source: Cedefop.

A1.2. Type 2 measures

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure/ budget) ¹ | Staff costs | Other costs | Cost per participant | Level of implementation | Responsible entity | Target group | Funding source | Intensity/ length of support | Output data | Outcome data |
|------------------------|-------------------|--|---|---|---|-------------------------|--|--|--|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Type 2 measures | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BE3 | 2017 | EUR 800 000 (budget) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 150 (only guidance phase) to EUR 820 or EUR 1 195 (full process leading to certification) | Sub-national | PES, Regional Department of Education, Regional Department of Work | Universal measure All adult population | ESF, National government, contribution from participants | Level 4 | ✓ | x |

Source: Cedefop.

A1.3. Type 3 measures

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure / budget) ¹ | Staff costs | Other costs | Cost per participant | Level of implementation | Responsible entity | Target group | Funding source | Intensity / length of support | Output data | Outcome data |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|---|--|----------------------|-------------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Type 3 measures | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| AT1 | 2019 | EUR 103 800 000 (budget) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 620 | National | PES | Unemployed, employed | National government, Local authorities | Level 4 | ✓ | ✓ |
| AT5 | 2019 | EUR 32 294 654 (exp.) | INA | INA | EUR 1 874 | National | Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection | People with disabilities | National government | Level 4 | ✓ | ✓ |
| BE1 | 2019 | EUR 22 379 500 (exp.) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but costs included in total other costs | EUR 550 | Sub-national | PES | Employed, youth | Sub-national authorities | Level 3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| BE2 | 2019 | EUR 3,300,000 (exp.) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included/not included in total other costs | EUR 283 | Sub-national | PES | Unemployed, people with disabilities, long term unemployed | ESF, Sub national authorities, employers | Level 4 | ✓ | ✓ |
| EE4 | 2019 | EUR 1 350 909 (exp.) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 1 193 | National | PES | Unemployed, employed | ESF, National government | Level 4 | ✓ | x |
| EE5 | 2019 | EUR 270 506 (exp.) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown but certain costs included in total other costs | EUR 83 | National | PES | Unemployed, employed | ESF, National government | Level 4 | ✓ | ✓ |

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure / budget) ¹ | Staff costs | Other costs | Cost per participant | Level of implementation | Responsible entity | Target group | Funding source | Intensity / length of support | Output data | Outcome data |
|---------|-------------------|---|---|--|----------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| FR1 | 2020 | EUR 90 000 000 (budget) | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total costs | Sum unknown. Not known if included in total other costs | INA | National | Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Ministry of Education and Culture. Ministry for Social Affairs and Health | Unemployed, employed, youth | ESF, National government, regional authorities, local authorities | Level 3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| FR2 | 2017 | EUR 719 972 654 (exp.) | EUR 497 111 020 | EUR 222 861 634 | EUR 649 | Sub-national | National government; Regional government | Youth | EU (various sources), National government, sub-national authorities, local authorities | Level 3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| LT2 | 2019-21 | EUR 5 099 671 (budget) | EUR 4 356 230 Included in total costs | EUR 743 441 Certain costs included/not included in other total costs | EUR 392 | National | PES | Unemployed, youth | ESF, National government | Level 4 | ✓ | ✓ |

Source: Cedefop.

A1.4. Type 4 measures

| Measure | Year of reference | Total costs (expenditure/budget) ¹ | Staff costs | Other costs | Cost per participant | Level of implementation | Responsible entity | Target group | Funding source | Intensity / length of support | Output data | Outcome data |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|---|--|----------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Type 4 measures | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| EE6 | 2019-21 | EUR 1 263 398 (budget) | Sum unknown but included in total costs | EUR 327 559 Certain costs included/not included in other total costs* | EUR 211 | Sub-national | Association of Estonian Open Youth Centre | Unemployed, employed, jobseekers, youth | ESF, National government, regional authorities | Level 4 | ✓ | ✓ |
| FR4 | 2018 | EUR 2 379 306 238 (exp.) | EUR 2 160 246 496 included in total costs | EUR 219 059 742 Certain costs included/not included in total costs | EUR 655 | National | PES | Unemployed | National government, National Professional Union for Employment in Industry and Trade | Level 3 | ✓ | ✓ |
| LT1 | 04/ 2019-09/2020 | EUR 553 677 (exp.) | EUR 449 389 included in total costs | EUR 104 289 Certain costs included/not included in other total costs | EUR 1 688 | National | National government | Unemployed, youth | ESF, National government | Level 4 | | |

Source: Cedefop.

TOWARDS EU STANDARDS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF LIFELONG GUIDANCE SYSTEMS AND SERVICES (VOL. III)

This report is the third volume of a Cedefop study on developing EU standards for monitoring and evaluating lifelong guidance systems and services, expanding the evidence base on outcomes and impacts of career development support. It aims at generating better understanding of the costs of publicly financed measures connected to career development and career guidance for adults. The report is explorative, highlighting the limitations of the sources reviewed and the difficulties in collecting and exploring data on costs related to career development activities. In providing insights on inputs, investments and outputs in career services involving guidance, it makes a link between the findings in relation to intended outcomes and impacts of similar measures and approaches to monitoring and evaluation in lifelong guidance studied in Volumes I and II.



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