

Session 6: Round table - Reframing policies and systems for learning, work and wellbeing

Moderators: *Ernesto Villalba-Garcia*, Expert in VET supporting policies/validation, Cedefop, *Alessandra Biancolini*, Seconded national expert, Cedefop

Speakers:

- *Siham Saidi*, Senior adviser, French Employers' Confederation, BusinessEurope
- *Tatjana Babrauskiene*, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
- *Pauline Boivin*, Project and policy manager, Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLp)
- *Concetta Fonzo*, Deputy Coordinator of the EQAVET National Reference Point, Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche (INAPP), Italy, CareersNet expert
- *Inga Balnanosienė*, Director, Public Employment Services Network, Lithuania



Rapporteur: *Kristina Mazalin*, Senior adviser, the Croatian Employment Service (HZZ), Croatia, CareersNet expert



Summary:

Modernisation, integration, and implementation of lifelong career guidance systems to navigate a shifting labour market.

Siham Saidi (BusinessEurope/MEDEF) recognised the EU reference framework for lifelong guidance and guidelines as a tool to shape national policies. For employers, guidance is seen as facilitating job entry, reskilling and proactive transitions, which is critical given how fast the green and digital transitions shift job profiles. Common frameworks should provide a unified language across all service providers rather than becoming bureaucratic baggage. Ultimately, guidance must link with an ongoing dialogue that feeds 'real-time' labour market intelligence into local training programs.

Tatiana Babrauskiene (ETUC) highlighted Cedefop's historical, tripartite structure (unions, employers, and governments) established to support workers during major industrial shifts. Today's digital, green and demographic transitions leave many unemployed without guidance. Viewing career guidance as a fundamental social right, there is a call for an actionable implementation plan, better quality assurance and high practitioner professionalism (e.g., quality, ongoing training and qualifications, ethical standards). Furthermore, unions need to be included via collective bargaining and legislative influence, shifting from reactive crisis management to proactive worker protection.

Inga Balnanosiene (Lithuanian PES) explained that career guidance is now a core instrument for managing non-linear career paths. To address widespread labour and skill shortages, PES must act as a central connector, collaborating with education providers, NGOs, employers and municipalities. A "career-first" rather than a "work-first" approach can build worker resilience before exclusion occurs. The future of guidance must be a hybrid model—utilising digital tools, AI, and skill forecasting, while keeping a highly personalized and human-centred approach to ensure everyone is reached, especially those furthest from the labour market.

Pauline Boivin (LLLPP) brought the user and learner perspective to the table, advocating for the Framework's holistic approach to guidance that focuses on strengthening personal well-being, self-confidence and flexible learning pathways rather than the narrower labour market context. The framework can be viewed as a necessary compass, but it is worth mentioning the lack of an updated, binding EU level policy frame on guidance (even if many small initiatives exist). The importance of multi-professional "one-stop shops" (community learning and career support centres) is critical. End-users and civil society must be directly involved in co-designing tools to ensure true accessibility (access)

Concetta Fonzo (INAPP) focused on the structural realities of implementing guidelines, noting that before implementation can begin, policy makers must establish a common culture, shared concepts, and strong communication channels. The

framework's application can be divided into two levels: the systemic policy level and the practical provider level. To guarantee quality assurance, governments must invest in human and financial resources to build "data literacy" among practitioners, ensuring that monitoring and evaluation go beyond rigid placement numbers to look at success in a holistic manner, based in the suitable context.

Key points discussed:

1. Collaborative ecosystems and social dialogue

Career guidance is a complex ecosystem and shared responsibility that cannot be managed by one entity alone; it requires a "common language" and partnerships between public employment services, employers, trade unions, municipalities, and civil society. True implementation relies heavily on social dialogue and collective bargaining to ensure all stakeholders' voices are represented.

2. Navigating the "triple transition" with proactive support

Rapid industrial shifts driven by the digital, green, and demographic transitions are altering job profiles faster than traditional systems can capture. One approach is that guidance can help evolve from a "work-first" to a "career-first" approach, enabling workers to build resilience and transition *before* unemployment or a crisis occurs.

3. Frameworks as a strategic compass

The lifelong guidance framework and its 18 guidelines are viewed as a vital compass to guide national policies and establish shared expectations across providers and help clarify this for the benefit of individual users, whose needs are paramount.

Common frameworks must remain flexible and innovative, acting as supportive tools rather than adding unnecessary layers of administration.

4. User-centred, inclusive and holistic outreach

Guidance is framed as a fundamental social right that should help ensure equity, job satisfaction and safety for all individuals.

"One-stop shops" (e.g. community multiprofessional centres) including professional guidance are one arrangement that can proactively reach vulnerable groups, such as early leavers and to prevent and intervene in social inclusion contexts. Guidance should not strictly focus on employment metrics, but also on personal development, mental health, and building self-confidence and self-awareness for sustainable participation in employment and education.

5. Quality assurance and professionalism

Successful guidance systems require advanced monitoring, evaluation (evidence use and collection for system improvement), and highly trained, professional advisors rather than superficial check-the-box practices. Further investments in both financial

and human resources are needed to improve data literacy for beneficiaries and practitioners, so that tracking and evaluation metrics are genuinely useful.

Notable quotes

The common framework should not become an additional bureaucratic layer. Its real value is to provide a common language. (Siham Saidi)

It's not enough to write the guidance. We need an action plan. And in this action plan, we have to decide who is responsible for what. (Tatjana Babrauskiene)

The learner or user-centred approach means that we also need to involve the beneficiaries in designing the service that we provide to them, like they did in Ireland. (Pauline Boivin)

From my point of view, the guidelines help us to set the framework also for quality and quality assurance. (Concetta Fonzo)

I would say career guidance is also no longer a supporting activity. It is becoming one of the core instruments on how we can help people to navigate change. (Inga Balnanosiene)