

Good Adult Career Guidance

International case study evidence Summary report

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1. Introduction

Skills, labour markets and career guidance

- 1.1 Skilled people are vital for businesses, communities and a successful economy.** As businesses, communities and economies evolve and change, people's skills need to develop to allow them to make the most of new opportunities. The country needs skilled people who can help us to navigate towards a net zero economy, who can guide us through the digital transformations that AI will herald, and who can provide all businesses and employers with the skills they need to survive and thrive. People need to develop the right skills to be able to build their careers, make the most of what they learn in education and training and identify where they can best be deployed in the labour market. If the UK can successfully balance the supply and demand of skills in the labour market, it will establish the conditions for better wages, improved productivity, greater equality and social mobility. Creating this balance in our labour markets requires a successfully functioning education and training system, the availability of decent work and crucially, mechanisms to efficiently connect education to employment, such as career guidance.
- 1.2 Careers describe our pathways through life, learning and work** (McCash et al., 2021). The wellbeing of individuals is founded on the opportunity to build a good career, to find meaning in it and contribute to society. Careers have historically been seen as the preserve of the advantaged with the rest of the population viewed as simply focused on gaining and keeping employment (Watts, 2015). But, in the dynamic modern economy it is essential that the opportunity to build a career is available to everyone as it is through this that people can make a meaningful contribution to their communities and the economy. To ensure that all adults can build a successful career in a system where labour supply and demand from employers is aligned, many countries around the world have invested in public career guidance systems (Inter-Agency Working Group on Career Guidance, 2021).
- 1.3 Career guidance describes a range of interventions that can be made in education or employment to support individuals to build their careers** (OECD, 2004). Career guidance can help adults to make decisions about the next steps in their careers including their training and professional development, securing work, changing roles and managing their work-life balance (Bimrose & Barnes, 2008; Hooley, 2014; Whiston, 2021). Career guidance provides people with information, experiences and connections that help them to understand what they need to bring to the labour market and identify how best to engage with it. Where individuals are empowered in this way, they experience benefits including better wages, and less economic inactivity; employers experience benefits in terms of improved hiring, increased productivity and reduced staff turnover; and society sees increased labour market participation, fewer skills shortages and ultimately increased GDP (Percy & Dodd, 2021).

Career guidance for adults in England

1.4 Adults benefit from careers guidance they can trust to help build a fulfilling career. In England, there is a well-developed system of career guidance delivered through educational institutions designed to support all young people. The delivery approach for career guidance for adults is very different. Services for adults seeking work are offered Jobcentre Plus, run by the Department for Work and Pensions, which administers work-related benefits alongside work coaching to support people into jobs. The National Careers Service, run by the Department for Education, provides career guidance for all adults including face to face support, (primarily for Jobcentre plus referrals), a website, online chat functions, and a phone line (Lane et al, 2017). However, in practice the way in which the National Careers Service is funded means that it is unable to provide a face to face universal service and is typically focused on similar clients to those served by Jobcentre Plus. Other sources of career guidance available to adults include alumni services offered for a short period after graduation from further and higher education institutions, services offered through trade unions or professional or sectoral bodies, and paid-for advice from a freelance practitioner. There might be other sources of advice within any one of 49 national employment and skills related schemes or services (Local Government Association, 2024), but again these are typically focused on people who are out of work. In England, access to career guidance for adults can be patchy with services largely focussed on those who are currently unemployed, in education or who can access the small private sector (Hooley et al., 2023).

Overview of research

- 1.5** This report presents the **findings of a project designed to get a better understanding of what good career guidance for adults looks like internationally.** The scope of the project explored adults out of work who wanted to work, and adults who were working but faced issues, and therefore wanted support to move to different employment. Together these two groups constitute 11.1 million people in England (Percy, 2022).
- 1.6** The report presents the findings from research undertaken with individuals involved in adult career guidance in seven countries: Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium and Denmark. In-depth case studies on the first four countries have explored the whole adult career guidance system within each country. In the latter three, desk research and interviews focused on a specific aspect of the adult career guidance system.
- 1.7** Case studies were informed by a rapid evidence review of the literature followed by a long- and short-listing process to identify where practice was good and where lessons could be learned. The report primarily focusses on insights from the case studies, but some further insights from the literature are also included – the next chapter outlines this approach in more detail.
- 1.8** This report summarises findings from this work and focusses on **six key features of good adult career guidance** that emerged from the research and for which there was substantial evidence:

- **Vision and leadership** – national visions for guidance are clearly articulated in policy, supported by multiple government departments, and aligned to implementation plans
- **Collaboration and cooperation** – effective guidance may need to connect adults with other services and this requires different providers to connect both strategically and operationally
- **Professionals** – career guidance is delivered by a range of professionals all with appropriate training
- **National and local delivery** – services are delivered by respected providers both nationally and locally to meet the needs of a diverse population
- **Clearly understood and accessible services** – clear referral systems between services to help people understand and access what they need, including online and in-person
- **Labour market data** – quality assured data underpins advice and services to ensure information provided to adults is up to date, and services meet the needs of the economy.

1.9 Each of the following sections in this report describes our findings with examples selected from the case study counties and relevant literature. Further elaboration of the schemes in each country and the contexts they operate in can be found in an accompanying 'International case study evidence Annex' which provides the full case study accounts.

Public Employment Services (PES)

1.10 In this report we frequently refer to public employment services (PES). In every country that we looked at; the public employment service was central to the delivery of career guidance to adults. It was never the whole story, as all the countries supplemented PES provision of adult guidance with a range of other services provided by local government, education providers, unions, employers, the private sector and other agencies. But the PES provision provided a spine for adult guidance provision and so it is important to understand what exactly a PES is.

1.11 PES are a tool of labour market policy. While they are structured differently in every country, they exist to help match supply and demand in the labour market. The 1948 Employment Service Convention defined two critical roles for such services, firstly the administration of unemployment insurance and '*other measures for the relief of the unemployed*' and secondly the participation in government's '*social and economic planning calculated to ensure a favourable employment situation*' (International Labour Organisation, 1948). These specific and more general aims for PES continue to be evident in services across the world. The PES provide a network of offices located in major cities and towns in all case study countries. Their physical presence is important for visibility and to connect them both with employers in their area as well as training providers and clients.

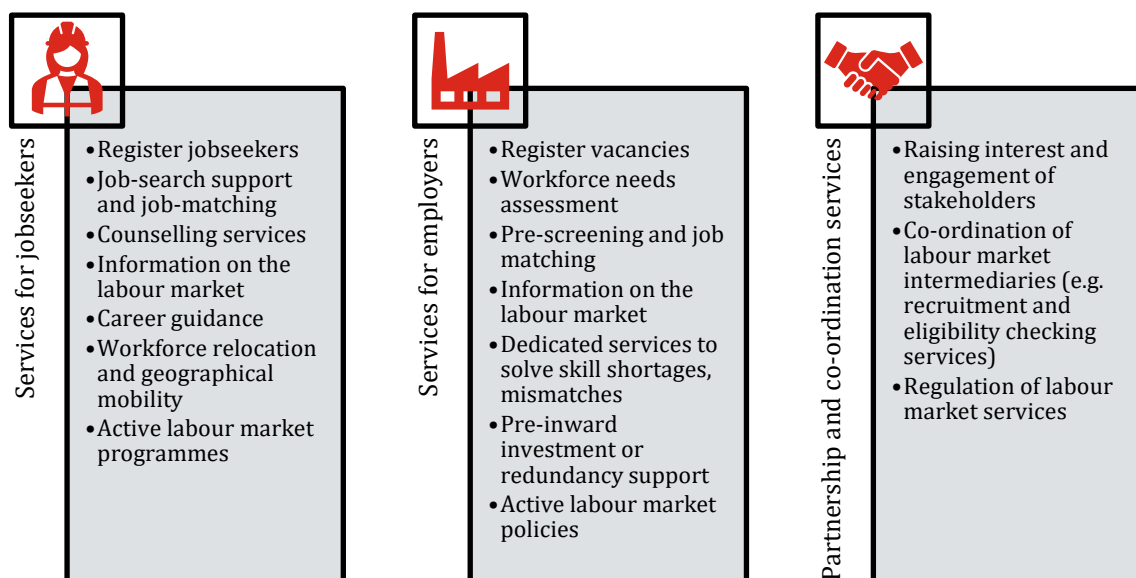
1.12 Jobseekers and unemployed workers are typically a core client group for public employment services, with PES being key players in 'active labour market policies' (such as training, public

employment programmes, employment subsidies, supported employment and support to create micro-enterprises (including self-employment). PES seek to intervene into the labour market to move people from unemployment to employment and reduce reliance on benefits (Kuddo, 2012).

1.13 However, PES also provide other services. They can support career guidance for young people through provision of in-school resources and services. They also provide services for employed people, for example by supporting access to lifelong learning or move towards ‘decent work’ which offers better access to stability, good remuneration and work-life balance. Importantly they can also act on the demand side of the labour market, working with employers and sectoral bodies to ensure that skills and labour are available where they are needed (Sowa et al, 2015).

1.14 Public employment service provision includes job and training information, placement services, training and active support services, including career guidance (European Commission, n.d.). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) have developed a typology of the kinds of services that public employment services normally provide (Avila & Rodriguez, 2021).

Figure 1-1: Typology of PES services adapted from the International Labour Organization (2021)



1.15 In most countries the range of services and specialisms offered by public employment services have been increasing over recent decades as they have been tasked with a wide range of policy objectives such as supporting workers during Covid-19, dealing with economic downturns, addressing youth unemployment or supporting the integration of migrant workers (International Labour Organization, 2023). Furthermore, PES services have increasingly become multi-modal with service provided face-to-face, by telephone and online and both within the PES offices and through partners such as employers, trade unions and communities.

1.16 As **Error! Reference source not found.** shows, career guidance is only a part of what public employment services provide. However, many of the wider PES services are strongly related to

career guidance services and interact with them on a daily basis e.g. the provision of Labour Market Information (LMI), job matching services and other forms of counselling and support. In some PES', career guidance exists as a distinct highly professionalised service in its own right, whilst in other services the boundaries between career guidance services and other PES services are blurred (Sultana and Watts, 2006).

Terminology

1.17 Throughout this report we use terminology that is authentic to the individual case study country. Local experts guided us on the translation of terminology into English. We call PES' by their local name where there is an appropriate translation. Each country also has a range of terminology which they use to describe 'career guidance practitioners' with many translating their practitioners' titles as career counsellors. In many cases, stakeholders are described as social partners, with this phrase usually understood to include employers and trade unions (and their representative bodies), and in some cases other non-government actors. As in the UK, ministries and agencies often change their name and scope and those mentioned in this report were correct at the time of the fieldwork.

1.18 Full references for reports and articles are provided at the end of this report. We provide links to key websites or statistical resources as footnotes within the text. These were all last accessed in August 2024.

Acknowledgements

1.19 This report has been authored by Jo Hutchinson (SQW) and Tristram Hooley (iCeGS, University of Derby). Research support has been provided by Jane Meagher, Jenna Galapia, Tom Boothroyd, Carolyn Hindle, and Matthew Timms at SQW.

1.20 We would like to acknowledge the contribution to this report made by the many people we spoke to but especially to our country experts; Jaana Kettunen, Jouke Post, Margit Rammo, and Peter Weber who kindly convened meetings with key experts and stakeholders in their countries, provided expert insight and provided translation services.

2. Methodology

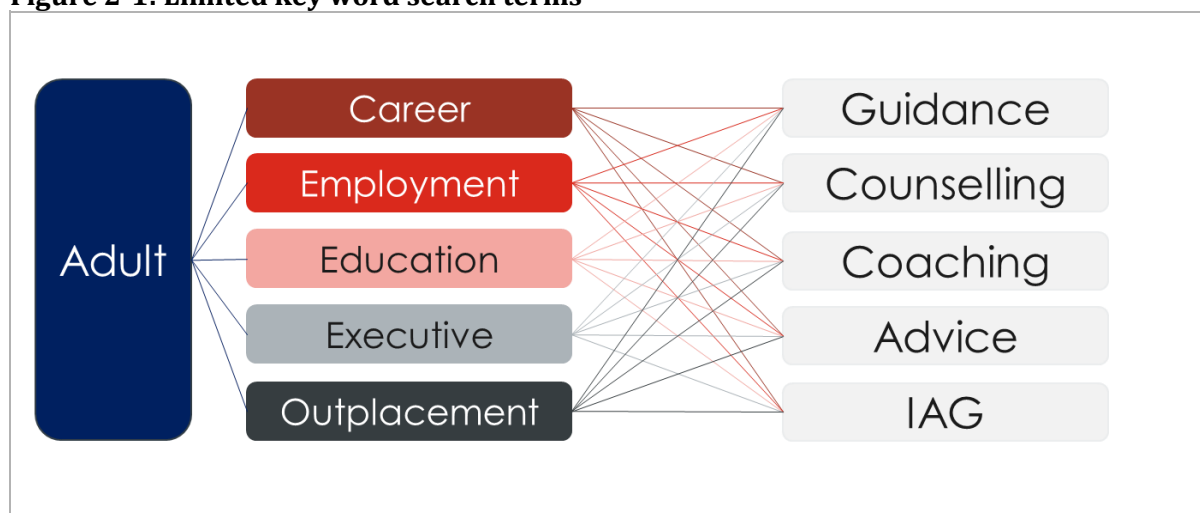
2.1 This report is based on findings from three phases of work. The first was focussed on case study selection, the second was fieldwork in selected case study countries and the third was analysis and reporting. This section describes those three phases.

Case study selection

2.2 The choice of case study country was critical to ensure the study provided insights about what was 'good'. A three stage selection process was followed.

2.3 First, a review of international literature was undertaken. This used a key word search strategy (See Figure 2-1) alongside citation chaining and expert input to develop a shortlist of 74 relevant resources. Their abstracts or executive summaries were coded to enable us to map the literature and 26 were shortlisted for full review.

Figure 2-1: Limited key word search terms



Source: SQW

2.4 This revealed findings relevant both to case study selection, and insights about good practice. Research evidence is often dated to the mid-2000s due to a series of international reviews that were conducted during this period by agencies including the OECD, World Bank and the European Union (Watts, 2014) Since then CEDEFOP (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) has been the most important contributor to the evidence base, although its research has focused exclusively on European countries. CEDEFOP have developed several 'inventory' documents summarising guidance systems in member countries (CEDEFOP, n.d.). These were influential in case study selection because many of the countries covered by this inventory have political and cultural similarities to the UK. This exercise generated a list of eight potential case study countries.

2.1 The second **stage collated performance data against six key metrics for all eight potential case study countries. Metrics were chosen that typified an efficiently performing labour**

market. Two metrics demonstrated full utilisation of skills¹, two linked alignment of skills with labour market needs² and two reflected equality of opportunity³.

2.2 Guided by these metrics, the **third stage involved initial discussions with international experts from the shortlisted counties** and a workshop with the full project team. The following factors then informed case study selection:

- Places that would demonstrate a range of funding models looking at services provided or funded by: (a) the state; (b) by social partners such as employers and trade unions; and (c) by individuals themselves
- Potential for interesting insights including the existence of available literature
- Places that had structured services to meet the needs of people with distinct characteristics as well as different localities.
- Availability of an in-country expert with good English language skills

2.3 This process resulted in a **shortlist of four case study countries:**

- Estonia
- Finland
- Germany
- the Netherlands.

2.4 In each country, an expert was identified who could provide contextual input and support with setting up interviews.

2.5 Initial interviews had also revealed aspects of policy that were interesting in different places. **Three of these were selected as targeted case studies** to explore specific interventions:

- Australia's 'Jobs Victoria' pilot programme
- the use of career vouchers in Flanders, Belgium
- and the role of trade unions in Denmark.

¹ Using the 'Labour Force Participation Rate (%)' and '\$GDP per hour worked' drawn from OECD (n.d). *OECD data.* <https://data.oecd.org/>

² Qualification mismatch (%) ([Skill needs by country \(oecd.org\)](#)), Alignment of training opportunities to skills needs ([Dashboard on priorities for adult learning - OECD](#))

³ 15-29 NEET (%) ([OECD Data](#)), Gini Coefficient ([Gini index | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#))

Case study method

- 2.6 Each of the four system-wide case studies involved a series of interviews with policy makers, delivery managers, academics and practitioners.** The number of participants interviewed per country varied (depending on the demographic, the geographic factors and the size of the guidance system), but interviewees in each country represented one of the following:
- Policy makers at either national or regional level to provide insights into the rationale and policy ambitions for their adult career guidance services
 - Senior delivery partners (public, private or voluntary / community organisations) to outline the reach of their service, its scale, outcomes for clients and design features
 - Career guidance practitioners to understand their backgrounds, scope of practice, client group, what works for their clients and professional challenges
 - Academics to provide context, a longitudinal perspective, and reflections on good and / or transferrable practice.
- 2.7** In total we spoke to 57 people; nine in Estonia, nine in Finland, seventeen in Germany and nineteen in the Netherlands. We also spoke with one person each in Belgium, Denmark and Australia.
- 2.8 Each case study asked interviewees about components of good practice that were drawn from the literature** (Annex B). Individual interviews focussed on a selection of questions best suited to their individual experience and expertise.
- 2.9 Interview notes were written-up and analysed thematically.** Case study profiles were shared with our in-country experts for their review to ensure factual accuracy and fair interpretation. A workshop was held to bring all experts together to share findings and agree which good practice themes were evidenced in the case studies.
- 2.10** Full descriptions of the four case study country profiles, and their features of good practice are provided in an accompanying 'International case study evidence Annex'.

3. Vision and leadership for career guidance

Summary of good practice

Career guidance contributes to achieving policy objectives of a range of different government ministries.

Responsibility for career guidance services is vested in key ministries with legislation to guide principles for delivery. Multiple ministries participate in strategy development and are engaged in delivery.

Policy objectives for career guidance are broad and typically connected to skills policy, social policy and active labour market policy.

Public Employment Services and many other forms of career guidance are primarily funded from the public purse.

Career guidance contributes to different policy agendas

3.1 Career guidance has multiple objectives as it is both an individual and a public good (Watts & Sultana 2004). It is commonly used as a policy instrument to achieve a range of different objectives including:

- *economic objectives*, by matching individuals to work that suits them, and reconciling the supply of labour to employer demand
- *educational objectives*, by supporting individuals as they transition between stages of education and training into employment
- *social equity objectives*, by supporting people from lower socio-economic backgrounds or with other characteristics such as being a minority in a particular occupation or sector, minority ethnicity, migrant status or other key social inequities to access opportunities
- *health and wellbeing objectives*, by supporting people to find meaningful work within their capabilities, helping them to manage work-life balance successfully and reduce the level of economic inactivity due to poor health
- *environmental goals*, through raising awareness of the economic and labour market changes associated with the green transition and supporting people to identify the need for retraining and sector switching where appropriate
- *peace and justice goals*, through supporting societies to allocate resources during periods of post-war reconstruction and supporting individuals in the criminal justice system to find good work that moves them away from criminality (Robertson, 2021).

Career guidance policy needs cross-departmental ministerial leadership

- 3.2** Each of these **policy goals typically belongs to a different government department or ministry**. Consequently, one of the challenges for career guidance policy is to ensure effective cross-governmental collaboration that focuses on the coherent delivery of quality career guidance for adults (or lifelong guidance) whilst still achieving these different aims (McCarthy & Hooley, 2015). Inevitably, in different countries and during different periods the objectives that are emphasised within career guidance policy vary considerably.
- 3.3** Both the wider literature and the case studies suggest that the existence of a **strong policy framework for the delivery of adult career guidance services** is essential. Guidance policies need to articulate a strategy and to have a statutory basis with appropriate regulatory and funding support (Barnes et al., 2020; Hooley et al., 2015). The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2012) developed a toolkit for the development of national policies around lifelong guidance which provided a framework for policy development that included articulation of the outcomes of guidance, addressing issues of access, ensuring co-operation and co-ordination, quality assurance, and the use of evidence to inform policy and practice.
- 3.4** In the case study countries, we found that different ministries collaborate to develop a labour market or lifelong strategy including career guidance services.
- In Estonia, the authorities responsible for the development of lifelong guidance in the public sector are the Ministry of Education and Research (which has prime responsibility for delivery) and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Adult career guidance is linked to two national policy objectives. The first is a commitment to lifelong learning to respond to the changing skills needs of the country due to innovative technology and the changing demands of the economy. The second is an ambition to ensure high employment and quality working conditions alongside a commitment to supporting people through periods of unemployment with grants and labour market services and benefits (Riigi Teataja, 2023).
 - In the Netherlands, responsibility for career guidance is split across three main ministries, the OCW (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science), the EZK (Economic Affairs and Climate Policy), and the SZW (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment). There is a longstanding foundation of Dutch legislation that supports the provision of career guidance in the country including legislation focused on unemployed workers (Unemployment Insurance Act, the Work and Income According to Labour Capacity Act, and the Work and Care Act), as well as legislation designed to engage those who are out of the labour market, including those with disabilities, into the workforce. In 2022, the government focussed on strategy and policy measures that brought the various strands of legislation together to improve lifelong learning and career guidance in both education and public employment sectors (CEDEFOP, 2023).
 - In Germany, the federal government's Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for career guidance (the Länder [regional states] are responsible for career guidance in schools). National policy is underpinned by the German social code III (*Sozialgesetzbuch*). This

mandates the Public Employment Service in Germany, the Federal Employment Agency (FEA - *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*), to offer career guidance, free of charge, to all adult citizens who are either in the labour market or who are intending to enter the labour market.

- 3.5** Other countries have different statutory objectives for their career guidance services. For example, in France, a specific law (the right to training and careers guidance) provides a framework enabling all individuals throughout their working lives to access guidance. Linked to this, all employees have a legal right, every five years, to a skills assessment, with centres set up to implement the scheme (Barnes et al, 2020).

Guidance policy connects with skills and active labour market policy

- 3.6** Career guidance is a policy intervention that can be used to help economies cope with skills shortages that arise when there is high employment, or when economies restructure, for example due to changes in technology or the need to respond to climate change. The case study countries do this by linking their **lifelong learning and lifelong guidance systems** with the aspiration to provide an integrated and coherent development pathway for individuals throughout their lives.

- Germany's revised lifelong guidance strategy (*Lebensbegleitende Berufsberatung*, 2017) highlighted the need for more skilled workers for the German economy. In 2018 the law on 'improvement of qualification opportunities' (*Qualifizierungschancengesetz*) expanded the pre-existing legal mandate to include the provision of guidance to employed adults, as well as entitling them to more vocational training and associated financial support.
- In Estonia, government policy combines delivery of unemployment prevention measures including a degree study allowance, subsidised training and in-work support for people to obtain relevant qualifications (The Education and Youth Board of Estonia, 2023, p.11) with career guidance noting that access to such support is mediated by a PES career counsellor.

- 3.7** Across Europe, different **countries combine career guidance with work-based learning to provide pathways into different forms of employment**. Partners within employment and education sectors in Spain have jointly financed integrated centres designed to provide a lifelong system. These centres offer career information and guidance services, in addition to accreditation of prior learning services (Sultana, 2008).

Career guidance services are resourced through taxation

- 3.8** All PES and many other forms of career guidance are resourced by a combination of **national and local government spend**. In some countries' taxation systems an 'unemployment insurance' is paid by employers and employees. For example in Germany social insurance is paid through taxes on employees in stable socially secure jobs (excluding freelancers and the self-employed), and other federal taxes.

- 3.9** Denmark has a slightly different system where *Unemployment Insurance Funds* are voluntary schemes administered through private associations of employees or self-employed persons.

There are 22 different Funds which provide unemployment benefits to members. The receipts generated by voluntary contributions do not cover costs and all are considerably supplemented by state contributions. Alongside payment of benefits, members may also access career guidance (both when employed and unemployed). Unemployment Insurance Fund providers must be independent, but many are also run in affiliation with trade unions who, in 2018, represented 67% of the workforce (European Trade Union Institute (n.d.)).

- 3.10 Resources committed to adult career guidance are difficult to quantify.** Case study PES' were reported to be well resourced with qualified career counsellors based in offices in towns and cities across the case study countries, but information about budget allocation for career guidance was not available. All case study countries also use European Social Funds to support aspects of their career guidance provision. PES allocations do however vary over time and between governments.
- 3.11 Many countries had long term funding arrangements.** In Estonia, a new *Labour Market Measures Act* (from 31 December 2023) will give their PES a mandate to offer services until 2029, while in Germany, services are re-commissioned every three years.
- 3.12 Some of the case study countries were undergoing changes in how their system was to be funded, with responsibilities shifting from national to local.** Both in Finland and in the Netherlands, there are current developments that may move some PES responsibilities to local government and it is not clear which resources will be protected in the transition.

4. Accessible career guidance services

Summary of good practice

Statutory instruments make career guidance available both to unemployed and working adults in the four case study countries.

The PES provide a publicly identifiable network of offices located in major cities and towns. These physical locations are an important facilitator of universal access.

In addition, there are typically a range of targeted and specialist services. These include services for young adults in hubs where a range of services can be accessed, services for migrants and those with long term illness or disability.

Standard career guidance tools, such as action plans and psychometric tests, are tailored to the context or language of specific groups to make them relevant.

Outreach provision designed to bring career guidance practitioners into communities that would not otherwise have the opportunity for face-to-face engagement and offered in local languages.

Services can be accessed digitally using telephone and web-based communication as well as in-person

Statutory instruments give both unemployed and working adults access to career guidance.

4.1 All four countries have **legislation or statutory instruments that establish which adults have a right to access free career guidance**, and in all cases those rights extended to adults in work:

- In Finland, the entitlement to lifelong guidance is set out in national legislation (CEDEFOP, 2021) delivered through a network of Employment and Economic Development Offices known as TE Offices.
- In Estonia, the Labour Market Measures Act provides financial security to PES until 2029 and establishes which people are entitled to which services from *Eesti Töötukassa*. The focus of the act is to help adults enter or return to the employment market by ensuring they have the right skills.
- In Germany, the 2018 law on improvement of qualification opportunities (*Qualifizierungschancengesetz*) expanded the legal mandate for the provision of guidance to employed adults, as well as entitling them to more vocational training.

- In the Netherlands, the PES recently started to offer services for working people, while in its regions, the Learning and Working Programme (*Leerwerkloketten*), also work with adults who are looking to change career and unemployed people.

- 4.2** The right to access career guidance applies to all adults and in practice, some PES guidance services are universal as anyone can walk into one of their offices, speak to someone who can signpost and then access resources. In addition, all four of the main case study countries' **PES have been tasked with extending their career counselling services to employed people.** Services for employed people are less well-established but include access to retraining support, and advice for people who want to change role or return to work after a period of ill-health or caring responsibility. In between these two are services for people in precarious employment including people who are facing redundancy and those with long term illnesses. Services for these groups use a range of different delivery models, including services commissioned from the PES (e.g. programmes delivered through community groups); services provided by PES sub-units (e.g. youth specialists or in-work adult specialists) either within PES offices or located within other services' spaces.
- 4.3** In reality though limited resources mean PES services are targeted at jobseekers through job placement services. Consequently the challenges are how to ensure that people who would benefit from services know about and have access to them, and how to deliver those services within the resources available. This section describes ways in which adult career guidance services are made accessible to reach both unemployed and employed adults.

Targeted and specialised services extend universal services

- 4.4** Specialist targeted services for young people and young adults (who are variously defined as being between the ages of 16-18 to 16-29 years in different countries). In Estonia, the 'Education and Youth board' act as advisers to government on careers education for those aged 7-26 years and those in educational institutions, while additional support for young adults (notably those characterised as NEET) is through projects funded either through European Social Funds or in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. In Germany, there are also Youth Employment Agencies (part of the FEA) who run a separate service for all young adults under the age of 25 years that offers social support, career counselling and work coaching. These programmes are offered with the self-activation tenet ("*Do something for yourself, we help you.*").
- 4.5 Services for migrants.** Career guidance is part of a policy response to the economic integration of migrants (Haug & Svennungsen, 2019; Hooley et al., 2024; Inter-Agency Working Group on Career Guidance, 2021). In Germany, the FEA are collaborating with the Federal Authority for Migrants and Refugees to build services and systems designed specifically for migrants. In Estonia (a country where 10% of the workforce are not Estonian citizens), 'International House' (part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications) offers careers guidance to international newcomers provided by PES staff alongside other public services.

4.6 Services for people with long term illness. In the Netherlands, several private organisations specialise in providing services for people with long term sickness, including career guidance. People with injuries (typically work-related), mental health issues and/or dementia (and other age-related illnesses) access support jointly funded through the government, insurance companies, and employers themselves.

4.7 Services for employed people from the PES are evolving and efforts are underway to ensure that people are aware and therefore can access them. For example,

- in Estonia, career counselling provided by the PES (*Eesti Töötukassa*) is subdivided into ‘Work-centred counselling’ which is a mandatory requirement for those that are unemployed, and career counselling which is voluntary and more open-ended available to both employed and unemployed clients.
- In Germany, the FEA’s *Berufsberatung im Erwerbsleben* (People in Employment) programme operates through 39 local networks across Germany. In 2022, the service reached 150,000 participants and by July 2023 the service had already reached 100,000 in that year. It has four target groups:
 - employed people looking to change career, for example due to a health situation, to secure more highly qualified work (to establish a more stabilised income), or to enhance their work satisfaction (this group represents between 50%-60% of the users of the new service)
 - people who are trying to re-enter the labour market after a break
 - people who are in placement services but have complex cases
 - people who have finished vocational training or higher education.

Personalised development plans help make services relevant to different groups

4.8 Personalised development plans can be useful both for job seekers and clients in work and templates and interactive tools were available in the case study counties for people to access and use. The literature also identifies a range of services which use personalised development plans or programmes to tailor guidance to individual needs. Key examples include:

- Developing tools in collaboration with partners. Prisons in Finland have worked with local schools to design personalised learning programmes for inmates, according to individual learning goals. Inmates receive guidance as part of the learning programme (CEDEFOP, 2020b).
- Using personal development plans in the workplace to support career development. For example, Nokia was reported to place a great deal of importance to every employee having a high-quality plan, collaboratively developed between a manager and the employee (CEDEFOP, 2008).

Outsourcing and outreach helps to bring services closer to their communities

- 4.9** Further examples of practices where services were made accessible to key groups can be found in the literature. For example, Sultana (2008) provided examples of services that were established in 'neutral localities' such as libraries, one-stop advice centres in neighbourhoods, and mobile vocational information centres that bring services to people in rural areas and small towns.
- 4.10 Outsourced services provided by PES partners.** The public sector in multiple countries has outsourced services to VCSE or private sector organisations to use their expertise in working with specific target groups. For example, Italy and Malta have outsourced services for clients with disability; Ireland, Italy and Slovenia have outsourced services for early school leavers; and Germany has outsourced services for clients with complex needs (Sultana & Watts, 2006).
- 4.11 Career guidance provision in settings embedded in the community.** Organisations embedded in the community are often closer to the contexts and experiences of different groups of adults, and therefore can respond more effectively to their needs where appropriate funding and governance arrangements are established. This can be done through bringing services into accessible buildings, provision in local languages, or through delivery models that broaden awareness of career guidance services and how to access them. The idea of delivering career guidance to people in community locations is well supported by the academic evidence and remains as an important area for development (Thomsen, 2012). The case studies demonstrated some different ways in which career guidance was being delivered in, by or to communities.
- *In Freiburg in Germany, Volkshochschule Freiburg* (the city's college) is based in the city library. Its career practitioners train about ten local people who then raise awareness of the service in their respective communities. In one year, the service supports around 2,000 people.
 - Estonia's *Eesti Töötukassa* employ career counsellors who speak the different languages used by their communities (such as Estonian and Russian in Estonia).
- 4.12** In the state of Victoria, Australia, the 'Jobs Victoria' pilot showed how locally delivered, partnership-based services for career guidance reached new groups. The service was funded with \$13.4 million AUD over two years and provided services for over 37,000 clients. It used a network of different organisations, and signposting and outreach work by Job Advocates, to establish a system of career guidance that reached people who were not engaging with support services including Indigenous First Nation people, people with disabilities, women returning to work, career changers and recent graduates. The two year project saw the service become well-established, have a good reputation and establish good links into different communities..

Communication technologies improve accessibility

- 4.13** In all case study countries, **services all had multiple access points i.e. face to face, phone and online.** This ensured the population could access career guidance in the way that suited them. Some of the countries include quite remote and rural communities meaning that access to

services by phone or online is much more convenient. Face to face services were often reserved to those most in need to ensure value for money across the system.

4.14 Estonia has a reputation for being digitally advanced in both its private and public sectors. Careers counsellors offer digital appointments and use webinars and chat facilities to engage with clients. Digital services are particularly important in rural areas where transport connectivity may be too weak for individuals to meet a counsellor in person. In recent years the PES has expanded the digital component of both sectors:

- provision of services to clients, which includes websites providing information on careers possibilities and labour market conditions, digitally administered tools (i.e. personality tests) and, in some instances, integration of virtual reality (VR) technology
- a digital portfolio where individuals can map their competences ('My Career')
- internal management processes, which includes the 'OTT system', an AI profiling tool which estimates jobseekers' likelihood of returning to the labour market soon and helps to plan and manage counsellor case-loads⁴.

4.15 In 2011, in Denmark, an online service (distinct from the PES) was set up by the Danish Ministry of Children and Education who established *eVejledning* (e-guidance) for all citizens across the country to be able to contact a guidance counsellor, including evenings and weekends (Meedom Nielsen, 2021). The *eVejledning* service combines telephone, online chat and videoconferencing services to deliver a range of guidance services. The Danish service has also recently inspired the launch of a similar service in Norway which now also offers a national e-guidance service (Euroguidance, 2022).

⁴ Eesti Töötukassas (2021) Decision support tool "OTT" for employment counsellors in the Estonian PES. Accessible at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/PES-Digital-Oct2021-Estonia.pdf>

5. Structures for collaboration and co-operation

Summary of good practice

Government departments and ministries co-operate to develop their career guidance policy and implementation services

Government both participates in, and is advised and supported by specially convened networks of informed and committed stakeholders

Local and regional networks exist to support policy integration and delivery. In some places these are services provided in specialist local offices, whereas in others career guidance services are co-located or integrated with a range of other services to support people in their local area

Stakeholder integration and coordination provides efficiency and extends reach to people who might not otherwise access services.

Quality frameworks are used to assure quality provision when services are delivered nationally and when they are commissioned.

Cross-cutting policy objectives require multi-agency collaboration

- 5.1** As discussed in Section 2, career guidance services for adults deliver outcomes that span several different public policy agendas, and this shapes which ministry has primary responsibility for their delivery. The complexity of public policy interests in career guidance often requires flexible and complex delivery structures with multiple players involved. Managing this requires careful interaction between ministries both as a part of policy development and policy implementation. This is evidenced through co-authoring policy and strategy documents and the creation of both formal and informal structures to facilitate effective inter-ministerial collaboration.
- 5.2** In addition to inter-ministerial collaboration, many countries also develop broader mechanisms for co-operation and co-ordination which bring together different ministries and other governmental and non-governmental actors. The need for effective collaboration and co-ordination is perhaps even greater at the local level. This section looks at the way different countries involve multiple stakeholders in the governance, direction and delivery of career guidance services to ensure that they are serving broad public policy objectives.

Collaborative stakeholder structures are used to inform government policy

- 5.3** The case study countries had **specially convened networks or organisations** that brought together different stakeholders with interests in career guidance (for both adults and young

people). These groups were convened with similar objectives and they all share information and research insights. They all bring together people from relevant Ministries with other interested stakeholders:

- In Finland, the Lifelong Guidance Working Group includes representatives from four different Ministries, as well as relevant government agencies, NGO's, trade unions, employee organisations and practitioners. The Lifelong Guidance Working Group is an advisory body which shares information about career activities, policies and practices and provides strategic advice to the ministries.
- In Estonia, the development and availability of careers services (either through educational providers or *Eesti Töötukassa*) is monitored and discussed as part of the National Careers Guidance Forum which meets three to four times a year. Membership includes: The Ministry of Education and Research, the Association of Estonian Careers Counsellors, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, student representative organisations, school heads, representatives and the qualifications authority. Their main goal is to discuss and advise on how to monitor career services and how to ensure that everyone gets quality careers services in Estonia.
- The Germany, 'National Guidance Forum for Education, Career and Employment' (NFB - *Nationale Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*) acts as a useful advisory group for career guidance. Established in 2006 as an independent network of organisations and experts, it promotes the quality delivery of counselling services across Germany. Members of the forum include training centres, professional associations and trade unions - government ministries and the FEA also attend, but only in an observational capacity.

Local and regional networks co-ordinate to deliver integrated services

- 5.4** Some countries have examples of regional provision that is designed to complement the work of the PES either by focussing on different client groups or extending services to meet the specific needs of different groups of people who want to change their job or return to work.
- 5.5** The Netherlands also have **regional centres that complement PES services**. These centres are **co-funded by different national and regional partners** which ensures co-operation and better joined up provision. The Service Centre for Education and Work (Leerwerkloketten) are partially funded by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment and partially by regional partners, including vocational colleges (VET) in some regions. In all 35 labour market regions, there is at least one physical service centre. These centres are based on partnerships between organisations involved in working and learning, including the PES, educational institutions, and municipalities. Activities and services offered at regional service centres include: career guidance, screening of clients, validation services, support activities, and education and training activities. Typically, clients in the Leerwerkloketten are partially

working people looking to change career and unemployed people. The Leerwerkloketten also work with employers to advise them on career development within their organisations. This brings together a range of guidance practitioners from different sectors into a single access point which strengthens the services that can be provided.

5.6 Germany also has provision within each Länder, although the structure, scale and scope of career guidance services varies enormously between areas. The **16 Länder are mandated to provide career guidance services to their constituents, in addition to the FEA services.** Some Länder such as Berlin, Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Hessen, Niedersachsen have long-established programmes in place to support career guidance for adults. Others de-prioritised career guidance for adults, and therefore services were less well developed.

- The Berlin Way⁵, for example, is a very well-established approach that complements FEA provision and is dedicated to bring services closer to those in need through a network of 10 service centres run by independent or non-profit organisations that deliver a service under a single quality management framework. It provides independent advice and guidance to connect people with education and training opportunities. These centres complement FEA support because the public employment services may not be able to offer the time or tailored advice that an independent provider can.

5.7 In Finland, a different model of cooperation is based around the provision of hubs which host other services. Young adults (16-29 years) in Finland can also access guidance through these 'one stop' centres (Kettunen & Felt, 2020). The one stop centres function as a single access point for other services provided by central and local government. In addition to careers guidance, which is typically provided by the PES, such centres also provide other services relating to health, social care, housing and other concerns.

Quality frameworks are used to assure quality in service commissioning

5.8 Where services are delivered through commissioning or partnership arrangements, systems that assure their quality are necessary and can be done in diverse ways (Hooley & Rice, 2019). These can include approaches that focus on policies, organisational capability, delivery processes, people and professionalism, output or outcome and user perspectives. It is common for countries to use a mix of different quality assurance processes and for different sectors and jurisdictions to use different approaches (Hooley, 2022; Rice et al., 2022). However, the use of a clear and consistent approach to quality assurance can be a critical tool in ensuring the coherence of services across settings providers and sectors.

5.9 All the case study countries had a focus on the quality of their delivery, but the systems used to assure this varied. Most viewed the **employment of well qualified and trained career counsellors (focusing on the quality of the people and their professionalism) as a**

⁵ Berlin Way: <https://beratung-bildung-beruf.berlin/hintergrund/>

critical mechanism for quality assurance. Some countries had additional quality assurance measures.

- Finland had several mechanisms to measure, evidence and assess the quality and performance of career guidance. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has developed a quality standard for all its products and services (including career guidance services in the PES). These include a satisfaction and feedback survey focused on the opinions of users of public employment services, the results of which are fed back into the strategic planning and improvement processes of PES services (focusing on the quality of the delivery process). In addition, some regions and local services have implemented their own career guidance standards.
- In Germany, the FEA has its own quality management department for its guidance services and has created a series of quality manuals (*Beratungskonzeption*) that set internal standards for guidance. FEA also frequently collects systematic customers feedback (*Beratungsindex*) and publishes the results internally. The National Guidance Forum produced a framework for quality development and competence profile (*BeQu – Beratungsqualität*) which includes standards in five different areas: overarching principles, counselling competencies, process standards, organisational standards, and societal context and objectives. Organisations can elect to adopt these standards if they choose.

6. Professionalism

Summary of good practice

Career guidance practice is a specialist role requiring suitable training. Guidance practitioners working in PESs are usually highly qualified with a relevant degree or higher level qualification.

Effective training can be achieved either through academic qualifications taught in universities or via work-based training or qualifications.

The creation and maintenance of a register of qualified professionals provides an additional mechanism to enhance professionalism.

Professional associations play a key role in setting standards and supporting professionalism.

Career guidance is a multi-professional activity that involves other roles as well as fully qualified careers professionals.

Career guidance is offered professionally by qualified practitioners

6.1 Internationally, career guidance is recognised as a specialised professional role requiring specific training and qualifications (Gough & Neary, 2021). The case study countries all recognised the importance of professionalism, although they took different approaches to professional qualification and accreditation of their career counsellors (sometimes known by different titles such as career adviser, or vocational guidance psychologist). It was acknowledged across the case studies that further work needs to be done to fully professionalise the career guidance workforce.

6.2 Different countries require different qualifications for career guidance professionals working in the PES, but usually they are appropriately qualified and usually have access to further training and professional development support. Where the educational system is not generating cohorts of trained professionals, a different approach is adopted. Countries have developed **competency frameworks** that describe the skills and experience that professionals in the role should work towards or demonstrate.

- - In Germany, career counsellors in the PES are expected to have, or be working towards, higher level qualifications in career guidance.
- - In Finland, the National Lifelong Guidance Strategy 2020-23 has a national competency framework and an assessment tool for career professionals. Labour administration staff receive in-service training hosted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

that contribute to this framework. This is in contrast to careers professionals working in education who are required to have a Master qualification in guidance.

In the Netherlands where there is no specific requirement for a Bachelor or Masters qualification in guidance for career counsellors, a process of professional registration has developed, led by the professional association.

6.3 In Germany, the FEA set minimum requirements to be a career guidance professional, which is usually a degree (Bachelors or Masters) in any subject, and some additional training. Alternatively, the FEA offers its own **qualifications** through the University of Applied Labour Sciences (*HdBA*), including a three-year bachelors in ‘Counselling for education, career and employment’ and a two and half year Masters in ‘Labour market-oriented counselling’. A large number of FEA career counsellors have followed this route. Different standards apply to career guidance practitioners in the Länder. In some areas these are highly comparable to the FEA, for example, Baden-Württemberg State Network for Continuing Education Counselling (LNWBB) delivers 6-7 optional trainings a year for practitioners, alongside networking meetings for institutions to exchange information, experiences and knowledge. However, in other cases the minimum qualification expectations of people delivering guidance in other settings were reported by interviewees to be too low and this compromised the quality of the service.

6.4 Estonia has qualified staff who are trained in their role and supported through the process to become recognised by their professional association. Career counsellors are all qualified to at least Level 6 (degree-level) and often Level 7 (post-graduate degree), and mostly have a background in social science, psychology, teaching or human resources. Staff in the PES are well-paid, and earn above the average salary in Estonia. There is no academic qualification available in career guidance, however occupational qualification standards are well established at Levels 6 and 7. The PES builds training programmes for their team that blend general, mandatory, in-person training in topics such as labour market information, counselling skills and practitioner training with on-line training modules. This was described as a **professional competency model** built around skills needed to do the job rather than qualifications. There is then further support available for staff to take the professional exam which is provided by the Association of Estonian Career Counsellors. These systems are significant in that they ensure the professional development of practitioners in career guidance (CEDEFOP et al., 2021).

A register of qualified practitioners can enhance professionalism

6.5 In the Netherlands, the **standards for professional conduct are set by the profession itself**. As is typical of other countries, the Netherlands has no specific Bachelor or Masters programme for career guidance nor any recognised training at higher levels. In the light of the limited regulatory environment for professionalism, the Dutch Association for Career Counsellors and Job Coaches (NOLOC) led a professionalisation agenda and **developed a**

professional register which has codified professional standards and ethics. So far, around 3,600 practitioners have been certified by and registered with NOLOC. Members who want to apply for certification by NOLOC need to have (at least) a diploma from a University of Applied Science in the field of human development, education, sociology, or psychology, and develop a portfolio of training and work, comprising at least 100 hours of career guidance training and 1400 hours of experience all gained in the last 3 years. Decisions around certification are made by a separate organisation with a panel of career guidance counsellors which assesses the applicant and decides whether they meet the conditions and qualifications NOLOC have set.

Other para-professional roles are necessary for quality services

- 6.6** Career guidance is a **multi-professional activity which relies on both the capabilities of the career guidance professional and a range of other roles**. In addition to career guidance professionals there are a range of other professional and paraprofessional roles that are essential for a quality service (Hooley et al., 2016). These include both paraprofessional roles who perform some of the lower-level tasks of the career guidance professional, often under supervision, and specialist roles including those who are specialised in working with particular techniques, technologies, or client groups. Furthermore, there are also a range of roles who career guidance professionals may work closely with and refer to, including trainers, social workers, occupational health specialists and psychologists.
- 6.7** In Estonia, there was a clear **distinction embodied in occupational standards** between a career counsellor and a career information specialist with the latter providing information and associated advice but performing a different role to a guidance specialist. Recognition of these different roles and skills means that people can specialise and focus on high standards of service delivery.

7. Delivery infrastructure

Summary of good practice

The PES are at the centre of the delivery of adult careers services in all countries.

The PES is fundamental to supporting the unemployed and also acts as a vehicle for other adult career guidance delivery.. The PES is also supplemented, in most countries, with a range of other forms of delivery.

Education providers advise potential, current and past students about the full range of opportunities

Trade unions can offer a range of career guidance services to individuals and employers as well as being an important stakeholder. These are valued because they are sector specific and impartial.

Some employers offer career guidance to employees but this is unusual.

Private sector provision can offer high quality services to people willing to pay but no country has an extensive private market in guidance.

Data about the uptake of career guidance services is important to improve effectiveness, efficiency and impact of services.

PES are necessary but not sufficient providers of careers guidance for adults

- 7.1** The PES provide a network of offices located in major cities and towns in all case study countries. They train a professional workforce and set standards for service delivery and development. PES will also commission other providers to deliver services on their behalf and use partners from the **voluntary and community sectors** for example to extend services via outreach or co-location (as described earlier in Section 4). A well-resourced and efficient PES is fundamental to the delivery of many elements of career guidance in the case study countries, but this alone was not sufficient to meet the needs of all adults.
- 7.2 Working lives can be complicated and adults benefit from career guidance at different times and for different reasons.** These range from managing their careers to achieve work fulfilment, responding to difficult events such as redundancy, and returning to work after a period of caring or translocation. A sole source of support is unlikely to be able to meet all these needs. The case study countries all found ways to deliver services through different organisations and using different funding mechanisms to extend their services to adults who are seeking paid work or different employment.. This section describes which organisations

(other than PES) that provide specialised career guidance including education providers, trade unions, employers and the private sector.

Education providers work with partners to guide people about a range of training opportunities

7.3 Individual education providers offer information about their courses and entry requirements. In addition, different countries have a range of **collective sources of advice that inform people about the full range of training opportunities available to them**. For example:

- In Finland, adult education and training is available to everyone aged 19 and over. There are three main sources of guidance for those seeking to return to education: the PES; the **educational institutions themselves who provide advice and guidance to prospective students**; and **online through Studyinfo**⁶ (which acts as a central point of information on all education providers and courses across Finland).
- In Germany, in Baden-Württemberg, the State Network for Continuing Education Counselling (LNWBB) was developed to secure access (including career guidance services) to further education opportunities including 55 adult education institutions. A different approach is found in Freiburg where *Wegweiser Bildung* collaborate with different partners including *Volkshochschule Freiburg* to deliver outreach activity to encourage participation in education and training. They have **several bases including a permanent site in the city library**. Their team of professionals offer face to face guidance. They train around ten community based 'pilots or guides' who raise awareness of the service in their communities. In one year, the service supports around 2,000 people.

Trade unions support their employed members and work with employers

7.4 Trade unions are integrated into public life in the case study countries. They may be part of the national stakeholder infrastructure that advises governments about career guidance, and also be providers of a range of services, including careers guidance, to their members.

7.5 Guidance services delivered by the trade unions in Finland are funded through a mix of member subscriptions and collective agreements with employers. The services provided include job searching support, career planning assistance and wellbeing-related services delivered through a mix of webinars, self-study resources and one-to-one discussions for members. Individuals value these services because they offer a higher level of occupational and sectoral expertise than is possible through the PES. Employers are generally supportive of this provision and view it as beneficial for their employees' development and well-being.

7.6 Trade unions are an important social partner in Germany, helping to develop vocational standards and associated training and advising on ways to integrate career guidance into the

⁶ Studyinfo - Explore lifelong learning in Finland : <https://opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/>

system. **Trade unions generally do not offer career guidance services to members but may do so if they are commissioned by the government to offer a specialist service.** In addition, we heard about an example of a project modelled on the UK's *UnionLearn*⁷ initiative which is funded by the Ministry of Education to **train peers in the workplace to offer educational guidance in or near the workplace.** These are not highly trained counsellors, rather they raise awareness of training opportunities and provide information to their workplace colleagues.

- 7.7** In the Netherlands, trade unions have an established provision of career guidance services, that equip workers to navigate a more flexible labour market. **Trade union services are related to the sector/occupation(s) from which the union draws its membership.** Trade union services include career coaching for individuals, career courses and other services which are typically delivered both online and in-person.
- 7.8** In Denmark, there is high membership of trade unions – partly linked to their distribution of unemployment insurance benefit. The trade unions also provide career guidance – for example: 'HK' organises shop and clerical workers and has approximately 200,000 members in 12 different fields including sales, administration, clinical assistants and laboratory workers. **It runs a single career counselling services for all its members called 'Career Telephone' which offers services via telephone, web chats, webinars, workshops and other forms of digital engagement.** The service employs five qualified careers counsellors who collectively support around 300 people each month. It is independent, impartial, and is designed to support people who are in work and taking micro-career decisions such as how to prepare for an annual review, whether to apply for a promotion, how to integrate a new worker into a much older (or younger) team and what professional development might be most appropriate for them. Counselling on these issues helps individuals to manage their career and it also helps employers to keep and develop skilled workers.

Some employers integrate career guidance to upskill and retain workforce

- 7.9** The workplace is an important location for people's careers. Many people will seek support with their careers from their employers and colleagues at work. In the last section we discussed how in many of the case study countries, trade unions are key to serving this need, but **employers can also be involved in the provision of career guidance.** All employers are involved in providing a key structure for people's careers through their HR function, in addition we found some evidence that, particularly in large organisations, some employers also provide staff with access to impartial career guidance offered by a professional whose service is delivered first and foremost in the interests of the individual, with organisational benefits assumed as secondary.
- 7.10** In Estonia, some of the **largest companies employ an internal career counsellor** that can provide career counselling to their staff, alongside their HR function. Companies are often

⁷ See TUC Unionlearn at <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/>

reluctant to provide a service that they perceive may encourage people to leave. Consequently this is currently only offered by very few businesses, likely because of an acute shortage of employees in Estonia, leading businesses to go to further lengths to retain staff.

- 7.11** In Germany, employers engage with career guidance at a national level to guide policy. German practice is to seek a consensus model of decision making including through work councils in larger companies. These have a duty to inform their workforce about continuing education qualifications, although this is not consistently exercised given their workload and competing priorities.
- 7.12** In the Netherlands, employers, particularly those in larger organisations and government departments, often employ a career coach or provide other internal career development services for their employees. The core rationale for this has been to support upskilling and improve the quality of the work force. However, some employers remain sceptical about the value of career guidance and fear that it will lead to retention problems.

Paid-for services are available but remain small

- 7.13** Career guidance services that are paid for by the individual are a feature of provision in all four case study countries and while they are **widely available, the sector remains relatively small in terms of the numbers of people who pay for career guidance**. Clients for the private sector were drawn to the service if they were highly educated, had specialist needs or if they wanted advice but did not want their employer to know about it. Practitioners who provided private sector career advice often combined this work with contract work with public services that provided a stable income.
- 7.14** In Flanders an initiative uses ‘**Careers Vouchers**’ to develop a network of career guidance providers (Meulemans, 2021). Their collective purpose is **to encourage people to use career guidance proactively** to manage their career rather than reactively once they become unemployed. A voucher is available to anyone who has 7 years’ work experience in Flanders, and who has not taken up a voucher in the last 6 years. After an online application is approved they are valid for three months and individuals can benefit from up to 7 hours of individual career counselling. Vouchers can be redeemed at careers centres that offer services that people want – the choice of provider is up to the individual. They are expected to build a personal development portfolio to guide their career decision making. The vouchers have stimulated the growth of private and alternative provision.

Monitoring and reporting use and impact of career guidance services

- 7.15** Data describing the number of people who access career guidance from services in the case study countries was collected and used by services but not widely published. Stakeholders said that PES offices did provide this data but that it was not readily available in official statistics. As mentioned earlier in the report, resources for PES are agreed on a regular basis in three-year (Germany) or longer (Estonia) cycles. The allocation of resources is partly based

on projected need. These countries do not have a Payment by Results system that demands data about the scale and characteristics of clients and their subsequent behaviours. Consequently, the services periodically undertake research to capture the nature of service users or the service experience:

- In Estonia, a **survey** commissioned by *Eesti Töötukassa* undertaken in 2021 found that just over half of young people (18-26 years) and just under a quarter of adults (27-64 years) had engaged with career services in the previous two years (Centar, 2021)..
- In Finland, a **satisfaction and feedback survey** focused on users of public employment services explored user's experience of the quality of the service, the results of which are fed back into the strategic planning and improvement to PES services.
- In Germany, we found **data reported about the reach of new services** (but not the standard business-as-usual model). It was reported that, in 2022, in terms of two target groups (people in employment and people re-entering employment), the service reached 150,000 people, most of whom were in the 'employed' target group.

7.16 Each of the case study countries also had an active research community, although only in Finland was this function integrated as part of the national co-operation and co-ordination structures. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture appointed the Finnish Institute for Educational Research to collect and conduct research to be used as an evidence base for regional and national decision-making in lifelong guidance. Stakeholders from all countries noted that further evaluation and research insights into practice and the effects of career guidance on adults would be valuable.

8. Labour market data

Summary of good practice

High quality labour market information is provided by government either through the PES or alternative national agencies.

National labour market information is used to inform active labour market policy such as subsidising training that addresses skills shortages.

National data is interpreted by regional bodies to reflect the structures of regional labour markets, or enriched through labour market research studies.

Labour market information is used by career guidance professionals to underpin their work and is provided in a variety of forms.

AI is being used in some places to scrape website data to provide labour market information, or to predict PES client behaviour to manage caseloads.

Labour market data is collated for government by national agencies

- 8.1** Data about labour markets and what might happen to them in the future is important to policy makers as it enables them to understand where current skills shortages and future skills needs lie (Alexander et al., 2019; Bimrose, 2021). It is also important that individuals who may want to change career or return to work, and the professionals who advise them, understand future opportunities.
- 8.2** Labour market information comes from a range of sources which include government data, survey insights, naturally occurring data (e.g. job adverts) and local, qualitative sources of information. Labour market information is useful to a range of stakeholders including government, employers and learning providers, but is used in particular ways by individuals as part of their career decision-making and management. We found that national agencies in the case study countries created data to show employment trends. This data was then interpreted at a regional level to reflect regional economic structures and presented to users in a range of diverse ways.
- 8.3 Employment and forecasting data is generated by national agencies.** In two of the case study counties, these are part of the PES and in the other two, they are public bodies.
- In Germany, the Institute for Employment Research (part of the FEA) produces a labour market barometer which generates short term employment and unemployment data at sector, occupation and regional level.

- The Dutch PES is the main supplier of valid and reliable Labour Market Information (LMI) in the Netherlands. The PES provides labour market and data services for their own staff, other careers providers and individuals. They also publish national and regional labour market forecasts each year on their website. This information is collected monthly and can be separated according to profession, sector and region.
- In Finland, the Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment (SECLE) (an independent agency reporting directly to reporting directly to the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment) was established in 2021. It provides a skills mapping and forecasting service which is designed to provide a strategic input to economic and skills planning.
- The Estonian Qualifications Authority produces OSKA which forecasts long term labour market trends using data from employment registers, population and sector surveys and expert interrogation. Alongside this, Statistics Estonia publishes national data and research insights.

8.4 Labour market information is **used nationally in different ways**:

- In both Finland and Estonia, data predicting skills shortages is used to provide subsidised accredited training to help manage inefficiencies in the labour market.
- In Estonia, the funding allocation for *Eesti Töötukassa* is based on forecasts on need generated by forecasts of unemployment alongside demographic data.

National data is interpreted by regional bodies

8.5 Further insights and richness is added to national labour market data by interpreting it at a regional level or adding research insights to interpret data for practitioners:

- In Germany, national data is interpreted for each Länder. Within the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, the *Gesellschaft für innovative Beschäftigungsförderung* or GIB (Society for Innovative Employment Promotion) provides labour market data that regional experts then interrogate at regional workshops. Their insights, alongside other information about regional issues (such as changes in technology, demography, and climate change), are used to explore present and future demand for skills and training. This is important because national issues (such as digitisation or the move to net zero) affect places differently according to the structure of the regional economy.
- The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has appointed the Finnish Institute for Educational Research⁸ to collect and conduct research which can be used as an evidence base for regional and national decision-making in lifelong guidance. It explores a range of relevant issues such as cooperation between education and workplaces, job competency,

⁸ University of Jyväskylä: <https://ktl.jyu.fi/en>

technological challenges and possibilities, and didactic solutions to support adult learning.

Labour market information is an important tool for effective career guidance

8.6 Career guidance professionals use a range of distinct types of labour market information to provide information about different occupations and sectors, training and development routes, and current vacancies or opportunities:

- Data about **short term employment trends and current vacancies** is generated for use by career guidance professionals. Germany and Estonia both have 'labour market barometers' that generate this information in a searchable format to provide practitioners with information about shifts and trends in the labour market
- **Occupational profiles** are presented in a range of different formats. For example, Estonia's youth work centres use virtual reality videos as an innovative way of introducing different occupations and work environments to those who may not have experienced them before (CEDEFOP, 2020a). Germany has developed multiple mobile apps including games that target key groups (e.g. young people, the unemployed). This includes an 'Apprenticeship World' app where individuals can explore specific roles, look for apprenticeship places and activate a tailored push notification for new vacancies. In Finland, this information is available through *Foreammatti.fi*.
- Many countries make career information **freely accessible online**, through investment in websites (providing information on job vacancies, labour market trends, and occupations) and diagnostic instruments (e.g. interest inventories and self-assessments of work values and skills) (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, 2015a). In the Netherlands, the PES is working with a range of other partners and is currently developing a new LMI initiative called *CompetentNL*, based on the Flemish system 'Competent'. The database compiles the hard skills and soft skills associated with professions in the Netherlands, allowing individuals to find out more about specific job requirements. It involves a 'hybrid AI' system that continuously scrapes data from key sources, such as job postings, to keep this database up to date and relevant to the labour market.
- Information about **higher education and vocational education courses** are also available to practitioners through website systems such as *Studyinfo*⁹ which provides information on courses and acts as a central point of information on all education providers and courses across Finland.

⁹ Studyinfo - Explore lifelong learning in Finland <https://opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/>

- In Estonia, the OTT system is an **AI profiling tool** which estimates jobseekers' likelihood of returning to the labour market soon and helps to plan and manage counsellor case-loads.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1** This research has explored the **features of good adult career guidance in different, comparable countries**. It does not offer a full account of how each system is structured, but rather draws on the expertise and lived experiences of people who are involved in designing, resourcing and delivering those services to their communities. It finds that services for adults are focussed on people who are out of work and want to find work, but also, that all countries have different services for adults from broader priority groups, and tailored to their regional economic or socio-cultural needs. Through an investigation of international practice in career guidance this report has explored what career guidance for adults can look like. The following conclusions are drawn from this work.
- 9.2 Just as young people benefit from good career guidance, so do adults.** Career decisions made by adults need to be supported by access to good information about current labour market data and opportunities to discuss and reflect on this. But whereas for young people it is possible to expect the education system to act as the principal conduit for career guidance, for adults provision needs to be more varied and flexible to address the complexity of people's lives and the diverse circumstances in which adults are building their careers.
- 9.3 International case studies provide strong evidence that it is possible to organise an effective career guidance system for adults.** Evidence from Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium and Denmark and from the wider international literature demonstrates that other countries value career guidance for adults and have developed a range of mechanisms for delivering career guidance that offer clear insights about effective delivery. Each country has developed their own systems in response to their national and local needs, and often tailor their services to meet the needs of different regional labour markets and different groups of people.
- 9.4 Career guidance systems need to be underpinned by a clear vision and effective political leadership.** Career guidance spans a range of policy domains and objectives, consequently it requires co-operation and co-ordination from a range of different Ministries and agencies. It also needs to be underpinned by appropriate policy or statutory instruments / legislation and guided by implementation-focussed strategy.
- 9.5 Maximising access to career guidance for the whole population required a range of delivery mechanisms.** Career guidance should not be restricted to minority groups, but rather should be available to all. This requires a range of delivery mechanisms through the public employment services, (adult) education, specialist services and other mechanisms, to ensure access for all. In some cases, career guidance practitioners also need to be involved in outreach to access communities that are poorly served by guidance.

- 9.6 Career guidance provision is complex**, involving a range of different service users, services and approaches, organisations, ministries and policy objectives. To manage this countries have developed **structures for co-operation and co-ordination**. Co-ordination requires the development of infrastructure for a wide range of stakeholders to regularly engage with each other, share good practice, identify key issues and propose alternative solutions. In some countries infrastructures supported by appropriate resourcing are in place both nationally and regionally to ensuring this kind of co-operation takes place.
- 9.7 Career guidance is a professional activity and practitioners need appropriate training** for it to be done well. Career guidance practitioners are usually highly qualified with a relevant degree or higher-level qualification. Career guidance professionals can be trained via an academic qualification or through work-based learning. It was also important in some countries for there to be a clear articulation of what constituted professional status and practitioners were supported by professional associations. A range of other roles that support the career guidance infrastructure area also recognised, with relevant training.
- 9.8 The public employment service is critical to the delivery of career guidance, but it is insufficient on its own.** The PES is at the centre of delivery of adult careers services in all countries. However, the existence of the PES was viewed as necessary but not sufficient, with most countries supplementing PES provision. This includes the provision of services by local government, education providers, employers and trade unions. No country yet has an extensive private market in guidance, although it is valued by some adults who use the service. All parts of the career guidance delivery infrastructure need to be able to deliver digitally using telephone and web-based communication as well as in-person.
- 9.9 Career guidance is built on high quality labour market data.** Careers provision needs access to employment and forecasting data that is sufficiently granular to provide both national and local/regional insights about skills and labour needs. Service commissioners used data to forecast skills and employment demand to ensure services were available to meet that demand. Career guidance practitioners need the skill to find, access and interpret this data as well as developing their clients' capability to do the same.
- 9.10** There were **some aspects of career guidance that were not well documented**. Notably, information about the proportion of PES or other services allocated to career guidance activities, the numbers of people accessing those or other services and measures of impact. Partly this was because none of the systems operated a 'payment for outcomes' commissioning model. Budgets were allocated on the basis of numbers of people within particular categories in the labour market and, on an estimation of the services that these groups would require.
- 9.11** The research identified a range of countries which have well-developed career guidance systems for adults. **While no country has perfected their provision, collectively they provide insights that can guide future developments of other systems.** Those systems

are based on an understanding that career guidance is a tool that makes active labour market policies work and help enact lifelong learning. That understanding that is expressed in statutory instruments as a right to access career guidance. By increasing the vision and leadership, access, co-ordination, professionalism, effective delivery and information base any system can offer services to support people to build their own careers. This promises benefits for individuals, employers and community organisations and the economy as a whole.

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Annex B: Case study research questions

Table B-1: Case study research questions

Primary Question	Abbreviated question topics
Policy oversight	What legislation is in place? Which ministries own or oversee it? What are the priorities? Who makes policy? Is it national or regional?
Resourcing	How is adult career guidance provision resourced?
Delivery partners	What is the role of the Public Employment Service? Which other organisations deliver services for adults?
Participants	Who can access publicly funded guidance for adults? Are services tailored to diverse groups? Do people self-fund?
Performance management	How are services monitored and performance managed? How are they evaluated?
Accessibility	How do people know what is available? How do they access them? Are they in person or digital?
Differentiation	Do different types of service user have access to different types of adult career guidance? Are these delivered by the same provider?
Labour market information	How is LMI collected and shared? How is it used by individuals, practitioners and policy makers?
Quality assurance	How is adult guidance provision quality assured?
Career guidance workforce	Is adult career guidance recognised as a profession? Are practitioners qualified? Do they access training? Who provides training?

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