

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Several tools are implemented to assure the quality of career services in Estonia; some of them being still under construction.

The quality in **general education** as well as in career education could be measured on the basis of the following indicators: students' and parents' satisfaction, an existing career plan of a graduating student, the competitiveness and readiness of a graduating student while entering the labour market. The standards stated by the curricula and teachers' training on career guidance have both significant roles in assuring the quality of career education in schools.

On **tertiary level**, the quality assessment systems are still to be developed. Until then, the quality of career services as well as the educational and supportive services is measured by the percentage of the drop-outs. In addition to that, the careers of alumni have also been surveyed.

Besides the qualification standards, in Youth Information and Counselling Centres (**YICC's**) the quality of services can be measured also with newly developed service standards which currently are in piloting phase and will be further developed during the programme the *Development of Career Services in Estonia*.

There are several tools to ensure the quality of the career services offered by the **labour market sector**: public service instructions, service standards, which state the minimum requirements for the service, and regular client satisfaction surveys.

## FINANCING

The career services are financed according to the schema determined by the provider. In **general education** the source of financing is the state budget that includes special grants for educational expenses of schools. The schools can organise extra support for career activities from other sources too.

Career education in **VET** institutions is financed through the state-commissioned education from the approved expenditure for one study place.

Career services in **higher education** institutions are financed from the universities' budget. There is also a private university where career services are provided by a voluntary students' organisation.

**YICC** receive their annual grant from the state budget. The grant will be given to the county governments for providing the information and counselling services to the youth in the county. Open youth centres usually belong to the local government and have their own fixed budget.

Career services in the **labour market** sector are financed from the state budget through Estonian Labour Market Board (ELMB).

A significant support to the development and service provision in the field comes through different EU programmes, incl European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, Lifelong Learning Programme and European Structural Funds programmes.

*"Every worry and trouble, big and small, that a person can experience has an ethical-moral dimension. To ask: what kind of career is best and possible for me is to ask: How should I live my life? We helpers should assist people to find answers to this fundamental moral and existential question." (R.Vance Peavy, Sociodynamic Counselling)*

# CAREER SERVICES in ESTONIA

*Career services intend to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. (OECD)*

## CAREER SERVICES in ESTONIA

Career guidance has been practiced in Estonia for about 90 years. The service has been called in different ways – the latest version being career services. Later development of this field has taken place due to the changes in expectations and requirements of the labour market as well as due to the advanced **concept of lifelong learning**.

The former staircase-image of one's career has come to be gradually replaced by the one of a **road passing through life** and encompassing all contexts that people operate in and all roles that they take.

Career services contain **career education, career counselling and career information** – its development and provision. These may include services in schools, universities, colleges, training institutions, public employment services, and companies, in the community sector and in the private sector. The services can be provided as face-to-face or distant sessions on an individual or group basis. The service package may include career information, assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education, work search programmes, and transition services.

Guidance in Estonia is mainly provided by the public sector within the education and labour market structures. Provision in the education sector tends to be more complex and divided across many institutions compared to the labour market sector.

In 1998, the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) founded the **National Resource Centre for Guidance (NRCG)** – Estonian Euroguidance Centre – to support guidance practitioners in promoting mobility and the European dimension within education and training and in the field of guidance. The main target group is guidance practitioners, whom we support by producing different information and methodological materials (printed and electronic versions), organising seminars and trainings on regional, national and international level, and developing web sites.

In 2008, a contractual agreement to develop career services was signed between MoER and Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) stating the areas of responsibility in providing high quality career services to the whole population. Within this agreement development of methodology, training system, service provision, quality and co-operation in the field is being assured.

After ten years, NRCG has become the main partner of MoER and MoSA in developing career services system. Developments mainly take place through different European projects within Lifelong Learning Programme (incl Euroguidance) and European Structural Funds projects and programme.

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## SERVICE PROVISION

Within **general education**, all schools must implement **Professional Career and its Development** as a compulsory **cross-curricular theme**. In many cases, it's often a side task for an individual staff member to be responsible for the co-ordination of the career management activities at school.

*Tasks of a career co-ordinator include co-operation with regional youth information and counselling centres (YICCs) and class teachers, supporting subject teachers in the implementation of the cross-curricular theme, organisation of student visits to/by employers and, in some cases, delivery of a non-compulsory designated career lesson.*

The **vocational education and training (VET) system** is looking forward to the development of a coherent and comprehensive career guidance system in general schools that would enable the students to find their true calling. In general schools the work of career counsellors is often biased and targeted at keeping the students in their own secondary school; after graduation they tend to direct the students to the university, rather than considering VET as an opportunity.

On **tertiary level**, eight Estonian higher education institutions have established career centres on their own initiative and without any central regulation. Services are mainly provided by career counsellors for current students, employers and alumni.

*The aim of the career counsellors' work is to help and support people in career planning, including in making decisions about choosing a profession, work, training and education, developing job search skills and forming an effective personal career planning style.*

The main aim of the university career services is to enhance students' job seeking skills, support them in finding job, and study their career choices after graduation.

Within youth work, a network of **YICCs** has operated since 1999. These centres **provide information and guidance services on site**. Besides career counsellors there are a number of career information specialists working in the centres.

*The aim of the work of a career information specialist is helping to fulfil the target groups' need for information concerning education, labour market and professions (including determining the need for information, supporting the search etc).*

Both practitioners also visit general education institutions to give lectures and to support teachers and schools in implementing career education.

Within the **labour market sector**, career counsellors are working in local labour market board departments across Estonia and they provide career counselling both as individual work as well as in group sessions. The aim of the career counsellor in the labour market sector is the same as in education sector.

The main focus of guidance in **the private sector** tends to be on job mediation and personnel recruitment. Links with the public sector are rather rare. Within companies, human resource managers sometimes address staff career management issues but it is not happening on regular basis.



## QUALIFICATION and TRAINING of GUIDANCE PERSONNEL

Since 2005, there are **three professional standards** for career practitioners in Estonia: career counsellor, career information specialist and career co-ordinator at school (including VET institutions). The majority of guidance practitioners working in the field have a background in psychology, youth work, teacher training or social work. In 2006, the Society of Estonian Career Counsellors organised the first **professional qualification examination for career counsellors**.

*The qualification standards regulate the required level of education and specialisation which provide the right to work in their field after having passed a professional training course.*

Specialists who have worked for 3-5 years have the right to acquire a professional qualification.

NRCG organises **information and training seminars** aimed at both education and labour sector practitioners to enhance their information retrieval skills, trends in economy and employment, solution oriented counselling, crises psychology etc.

*To exchange knowledge, related to provision and development of career services, NRCG organises international study visits in co-operation with colleagues from the Euroguidance network. This enables practitioners to get acquainted with career services in other European countries.*

Three Estonian public universities have piloted in co-operation with NRCG the first joint course training programme within the framework of the EU Structural Funds career services project. It was followed by three separate specialisation courses for career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools.

Currently, Estonian universities do not provide higher education in the field of career services. However, the knowledge and skills necessary for working in the field of guidance may be obtained by taking an elective subject at three universities. These subjects include career counselling and coordination, a career guidance module within human resource management studies.

*The Estonian Labour Market Board (ELMB) has developed a short pre-service training course for all new counsellors starting their work in employment offices. Likewise, ELMB organises regular further training sessions for their staff members to harmonise and raise their professional skills.*



## TIMELINE:

**1998** The National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (NRCG) is established

**1999** The Youth Work Act comes into force; YICCs are established

**2000** NRCG joins the Academia network - international study possibilities to practitioners

A concise web-portal to support career planning is developed under the name Pathfinder

Labour Market Services Act comes into force stipulating vocational counselling to be an official labour market service

**2001** The first training of sociodynamic counselling is carried out by Mr R. Vance Peavy

The career counsellor professional standard is approved

The first edition of *Texts about Career Counselling* is published

*Education, Labour Market and Careers Guidance in Estonia* – the first publication in English appears in print

**2002** The first issue of *Study in Europe* is published

The first conference of Euroguidance network is organised in Tallinn

The Society of Estonian Career Counsellors is established

**2003** NRCG receives a new logo depicting a bunch of keys with a coloured key referring to the concept of a right choice

A web-portal Ploteus about study opportunities in Europe is created as a result of international co-operation

Publishing of an *Information Work and Careers Data* aims

to enhance the quality of information management of Estonian practitioners

First handbooks aimed to class teachers delivering career issues during their weekly tutorials are published

Tradition of an essay competition *The Future and Career* for the students of upper secondary and VET schools is created

**2004** The newsletter *Career Wind* has been published quarterly ever since

A handbook *Practical training*

for both training supervisors as well as trainees themselves is published

**2005** A comprehensive national guidance project *The Development of the Guidance System in Estonia* is being implemented

The web-portal Pathfinder is given a new structure focusing on three different target groups

Three Estonian public universities pilot a joint training programme in guidance

*Education, Labour Market and*

*Career Guidance in Estonia* has been compiled on the basis of the European Handbook for Guidance Counsellors

Three professional standards for career practitioners are adopted

**2006** A national survey of guidance services is carried out - it is necessary to compile recommendations and propositions for working out a monitoring system of career services

Development of the National Guidance Policy Forum begins

The first professional examination for career counsellors takes place

A new Labour Market Services and Benefits Act is adopted

**2007** Several handbooks supporting career education delivery in school have been issued

The publication *Cooperation between Career Specialists and Parents* is published

NRCG is appointed as an Estonian representative in European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network

**2008** A contractual agreement to develop career services between two ministries – MoSA and MoER is signed

Pathfinder Job Descriptions Database is created in co-operation with NRCG and ELMB

NRCG is entitled to put into practice the programme *The Development of Career Services*, with the aim to change the career services more accessible to everybody

The compilation of the *National Guidance Forum* begins