Getting Skills Right

Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work

OECD

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Please cite this publication as:
OECD (2021), *Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/9a94bfad-en*.

ISBN 978-92-64-86111-4 (print)
ISBN 978-92-64-63163-2 (pdf)

Getting Skills Right
ISSN 2520-6117 (print)
ISSN 2520-6125 (online)

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Foreword

The world of work is changing. Digitalisation, globalisation, and population ageing are having a profound impact on the type and quality of jobs that are available and the skills required to perform them. The extent to which individuals, firms and economies can reap the benefits of these changes will depend critically on the ability of individuals to maintain and acquire relevant skills and adapt to a changing labour market over their working careers.

Career guidance for adults is a fundamental policy lever to motivate adults to train and to help address the challenges brought about by rapidly changing skill needs. Such services are particularly important amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, as many adults have lost jobs and require assistance navigating their career options in the changed labour market.

To explore this issue, the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs has undertaken an ambitious programme of work on the functioning, effectiveness and resilience of adult career guidance systems across countries. As part of this project, the OECD carried out an online survey in six countries (Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States) to better understand the user experience of adults with career guidance, and any barriers adults might face in accessing these services. The OECD also prepared a policy questionnaire to collect information on good practices across OECD countries in the area of career guidance for adults.

This report was prepared by Alessia Forti and Katharine Mullock from the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, under the supervision of Glenda Quintini (Skills team manager) and Mark Keese (Head of the Skills and Employability Division). Karolin Killmeier and Magdalena Burtscher provided research support and Sapphire Han provided statistical assistance. Useful comments were provided by colleagues in the Skills and Employability Division and the Centre for Skills in the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

This report is published under the responsibility of the Secretary General of the OECD. It was carried out with assistance from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation. The views expressed in this report should not be taken to reflect the official position of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation or OECD member countries.

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Executive summary

Career guidance is a fundamental policy lever to help adults successfully navigate a constantly evolving labour market through advice and information on job and training opportunities. Most adults who do not train say that there was no training offer that they wanted to take up (82%). This may reflect a lack of understanding of the importance of training in today's labour market, or difficulties in identifying suitable training opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the importance of career guidance services as many adults have lost their jobs and require assistance identifying suitable career options in a labour market that has changed profoundly. The pandemic has had an impact on both the supply and demand for skills. On the supply side, low-skilled adults have been disproportionately represented among those who lost their jobs. Many will need to upskill or retrain to find work. On the demand side, the crisis is likely to accelerate the adoption of digital technologies and automation, increasing demand for high-level skills. Career guidance can facilitate re-employment by identifying new job opportunities and proposing relevant training.

To better understand adults' experience with career guidance and the barriers they face, the OECD carried out an online survey in six countries (Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States). According to the survey, four out ten adults spoke to a career guidance advisor in the previous five years. Contrary to perceptions that career guidance concerns mainly young people in school, these results suggest that there is actually substantial demand for career guidance among adults. Most adult users speak to a career guidance advisor at least twice. The most frequently reported reasons for seeking career guidance are to receive help looking for jobs (32%) and to learn about education and training options (25%).

However, many of the same groups who already face labour market disadvantage and low training participation use career guidance less. The largest gaps are found between prime-age individuals (25-54) and older people (age 55+) (22 percentage points), followed by adults living in cities and in rural areas (14 percentage points), high- and low-educated adults (11 percentage points), men and women (8 percentage points) and the employed and the unemployed (2 percentage points). Workers in occupations with a high risk of automation are also less likely to use career guidance than those in occupations with a lower risk of automation. The differences between groups reflect a mix of attitudes towards career guidance, awareness of available services, and how career guidance initiatives are targeted. For instance, the small difference between the employed and the unemployed reflects that career guidance is often part of the re-employment support offered by public employment services.

Most adults who do not use career guidance services report that they do not feel they need to (57%). Older adults and less-educated adults are over-represented in this group. Another 20% of non-users report that they were not aware that career guidance services existed. A third sizeable barrier related to the lack of time for work or personal reasons (11%). Reaching out to disadvantaged adults to connect them with available services could improve training participation rates and labour market outcomes for these groups.

Three-quarters (75%) of adults who receive career guidance report being satisfied or very satisfied with the guidance they receive. But while most adult users (70%) experienced an improvement to their

employment, education or training status within six months of receiving guidance, only 22% said that guidance was useful in achieving that outcome. Policy guidelines for improving the quality of services are summarised in the box below.

Public employment services (PES) and private providers represent the two largest providers of career guidance services for adults (24% and 22% of adult users, respectively). Other significant providers include education and training institutions and employers. Each provider has its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the PES offers free counselling that is increasingly accessible to employed workers, who have historically not been eligible for PES support. However, satisfaction with PES guidance is generally low, possibly owing to overburdened counsellors lacking the time and funding to personalise advice. Private career guidance providers offer an alternative, but disadvantaged adults may not be able to afford such services, unless they are publicly subsidised. Career guidance outcomes are strongly correlated with the type of provider. Career guidance provided by employers or employer associations is found to be linked to positive employment outcomes and provision by education and training providers is positively associated with participation in training programmes.

Face-to-face delivery remains the most common channel to receive career guidance (63% of adults), though other channels started to take precedence during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, face-to-face services were suspended, and providers took steps to strengthen distance services (by phone, online). In many countries, online career guidance portals became popular sources of up-to-date information on labour market changes. Early evidence suggests that the inevitable shift to remote delivery of career guidance during the pandemic could have had a small negative impact on employment outcomes of beneficiaries, and it likely worsened access for adults with poor digital skills and those without a reliable telephone or internet connection.

Coordinating the many actors involved in career guidance policy is a challenge. Together, Ministries of Labour and Education and the PES are the bodies most commonly responsible for adult career guidance across OECD countries. Responsibilities are also split across levels of government. Various mechanisms are used to support coordination, including national career guidance strategies, legislation, advisory bodies, and working groups.

Career guidance services are heavily subsidised in surveyed countries. Services are sometimes available for free, or vouchers or subsidies are available to reduce the cost of career guidance for adults and employers. Most adults (74%) who receive career guidance do not pay at all for the service. Permanent employees are most likely to pay for career guidance services, while adults outside of the labour force and the unemployed are least likely to pay. This makes sense given the substantial public benefit to these groups receiving career guidance, and possibly re-entering employment.

This report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 presents findings on the coverage and inclusiveness of career guidance services based on the OECD Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA). Chapter 2 maps the providers of career guidance for adults and describes how services are delivered (e.g. face-to-face, online, by telephone). Chapter 3 reviews survey evidence on the quality of career guidance services, and discusses policy options for improving the quality and impact of services. Chapter 4 describes how OECD countries coordinate the many stakeholders involved in governing career guidance. It also considers funding, and how the cost of guidance is shared among governments, adults and employers.

The box below summarises policy priorities for countries to consider. Drawing from a policy questionnaire distributed to Ministries of Education and Labour, it identifies a set of high-level policy guidelines to improve provision and service delivery, coverage and inclusiveness, quality and impact, as well as governance and funding. Further detailed analysis of the institutional set up and economic context would be required at the country level to identify country-specific policy recommendations to strengthen career guidance for adults.

Policy guidelines for adult career guidance systems

Provision and service delivery

- *Expand availability of career guidance services, while ensuring that providers have the capacity* (i.e. advisor time, training and funds) to meet the specialised needs of distinct groups (unemployed, employed, inactive). Providers who specialise in providing job search assistance for unemployed and inactive adults may not have the capacity to meet the career guidance needs of employed adults, who primarily seek guidance for career progression or changing jobs.
- *Deliver career guidance through a range of communication channels.* Remote delivery (via telephone, videoconference, text messages, and online services) allows countries to meet demand for career guidance services at a reduced cost, and may improve access for adults living in rural areas. But remote delivery should not replace traditional face-to-face delivery. Doing so would deny access to adults with poor digital skills, or those who do not have a telephone or internet connection. Based on regression analysis and previous literature, face-to-face delivery is generally more effective than remote alternatives in bringing about positive employment outcomes.
- *Establish or strengthen existing online career guidance portals*. Online career guidance portals need to be user-friendly and aggregate information from different sources in one place. They should include information on skill needs, education and training programmes, quality of training providers, as well as training costs and financial incentives available (e.g. subsidies, tax exemptions). This information could provide a powerful motivation for workers finding that their jobs are at risk to look for further career guidance services. Offering the possibility to interact with career guidance advisors in real time makes portals more user-friendly and can increase their effectiveness.

Coverage and inclusiveness

- *Raise awareness* about the availability and usefulness of career guidance services. Countries can organise media campaigns, or develop registers of career guidance providers that include information on their costs, location, and communication channels (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, online).
- *Reach out to disadvantaged groups* including older jobseekers and the low skilled. These groups face difficulties finding good quality jobs, are under-represented in training participation, and could benefit from career guidance services. For example, trade unions could play a stronger role by helping at-risk workers to identify their training needs and arranging suitable learning opportunities within their companies. A sector-based approach may be an effective way to target adults in sectors hard hit by COVID-19.

Quality and impact

- *Establish quality standards* in service delivery that describe the basic requirements for how career guidance is provided. Accreditation against such standards could be a requirement for receiving public funds, or a voluntary means of quality improvement for providers.
- *Professionalise career guidance advisors* through competency frameworks to standardise their training and qualifications, and to provide a means to benchmark their skills.
- *Use high quality skills assessment and anticipation information* to steer adults towards skills in demand and provide the means for career guidance advisors to stay current about the labour

market. Adults can benefit from information about flexible career pathways that enable transitions from one occupation to another while focusing training on their skill gaps.

- *Tailor career guidance to individual needs.* Assess adults' skills using skills profiling tools, in order to provide personalised advice about career and training pathways. Providing adults with a personalised career development roadmap strongly increases the likelihood that they will achieve employment (by 25%) and education and training outcomes (by 7%), according to a regression analysis.
- *Monitor outcomes* by requiring providers to collect and share outcome data on a regular basis. Consider linking public funding to performance indicators, based on collected data.

Governance and funding

- *Improve coordination with all actors* involved in career guidance. National career guidance strategies provide momentum and often the funding to achieve priorities, while local implementation allows career guidance providers to adapt services to local labour market conditions and to take advantage of local networks of employers, training providers, and other service providers.
- *Ensure adequate public funding* for adult career guidance systems, in line with the social benefits that are generated. Target subsidies at groups who are under-represented in the labour market and in training participation (low-skilled, older jobseekers).
- *Incentivise employers and adults to contribute* to the funding of career guidance, in line with the private benefits they receive. One option is to make career guidance an eligible expenditure under financial incentives intended for adult learning (e.g. vouchers, subsidies and employer levies).

1 Coverage and inclusiveness

Contrary to perceptions that career guidance concerns mainly young people in school, survey data suggest that there is substantial demand for career guidance services among adults. However, adults most exposed to the risk of job loss and skills obsolescence use career guidance services less frequently than their less disadvantaged peers. This chapter examines the reasons why adults typically seek guidance as well as the main barriers to the use of these services.

In Brief

Ensuring high coverage and inclusiveness of adult career guidance systems

Building inclusive career guidance systems is key to ensure that all adults, including the most disadvantaged, can access the assistance they need to make well-informed educational, training and occupational choices. The findings of this chapter for the six countries (Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States) covered by the OECD Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA) can be summarised as follows:

- Contrary to perceptions that career guidance concerns mainly young people in school, there is substantial demand for career guidance among adults. On average, 43% of adults spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years. Most adults who used career guidance services had multiple interactions with advisors.
- However, many of the same groups who already face disadvantage in the labour market and in training participation use career guidance services less often than the reference population. The largest differences in the use of guidance services are found between prime-age individuals (25-54) and older people (over 54) (22 percentage points), followed by adults living in cities and in rural areas (14 percentage points), high- and low-educated adults (11 percentage point), men and women (8 percentage points) and the employed and the unemployed (2 percentage points). Workers in occupations with a high risk of automation are also less likely to use career guidance than those in occupations with a lower risk of automation. By contrast, SME workers use career guidance services more than workers in larger firms (5 percentage points). There is no statistically significant difference in the use of career guidance for permanent versus temporary workers, or for native-born versus foreign-born workers.
- The most common reason for speaking with a career guidance advisor is to receive job search assistance (32%). Accessing information on education and training options is the second most popular reason (25%). Few adults speak with a career guidance advisor only because they are required to (e.g. to receive unemployment benefits).
- Of those adults who do not use career guidance services, most do not feel they need to (57%). The rest report a range of barriers: 20% did not know services existed; 11% did not have time (for work, family or childcare reasons); 4% found the service too costly; 3% did not find a career guidance advisor; 2% deemed the service of poor quality; and 2% thought the service was delivered at an inconvenient time or place.
- In addition to speaking with a career guidance advisor, adults make use of other means to access information on job and training options. Some 69% of adults look for information online. A similar share (67%) relies at least to some degree on the advice of family members and friends. Some 57% of adults engage in career development activities (e.g. discussions with human resources professionals at work, visits to a job fair or a training provider).

Introduction

Career guidance can help adults to navigate a changing world of work. Policy around career guidance has tended to focus on young people in schools, who are about to transition either into higher levels of education or into the labour market. But given the changing demand for skills as a result of technological change, globalisation, population ageing, and green transitions, career guidance is just as important for adults as it is for young people.

Career guidance refers to a set of services to assist individuals in making well-informed educational, training and occupational choices (Box 1.1). This report focuses on career guidance services available to adults (age 25-64). Services may either be targeted at adults who are employed, unemployed or inactive, or may be open to anyone regardless of employment status.[1] A variety of terminology is used across countries to refer to the professionals who deliver career guidance services. For the purposes of this report, a 'career guidance advisor' is someone who delivers career guidance services, whether face-to-face, by telephone, instant messaging or video conference.

This chapter assesses the coverage and inclusiveness of career guidance systems in OECD countries. Section 1.1 looks at what share of adults use career guidance services, as a measure of coverage. Section 1.2 looks at inclusiveness, in particular assessing how the use of career guidance varies according to socio-economic characteristics, employment status, contract type, sector and occupation. Section 1.3 analyses the reasons why adults typically seek career guidance in the first place. Section 1.4 highlights the key barriers to the use of career guidance services. Section 1.5 explores the use of online sources of information on education and job opportunities, while Section 1.6 considers the use of less formal careers support (e.g. advice from family and friends, and participating in career development activities). Finally, Section 1.7 presents a profile of adults who might be at risk of being poorly informed.

Box 1.1. What is career guidance?

This report uses the term 'career guidance' to refer to services intended to assist individuals to make well-informed educational, training and occupational choices. Across the globe, career guidance is known by different terms, including career development, career counselling, educational and vocational guidance and vocational psychology.

Effective career guidance performs a number of functions. It informs individuals about education, training and employment opportunities, and makes this information accessible by helping with its interpretation. Career guidance helps individuals to reflect on their strengths and interests, provides tailored advice, and empowers individuals to make better decisions about their lifelong career development and learning.

Career guidance can be provided in different settings, for different target groups, and through different channels. It is commonly provided by public employment services, private providers, educational institutions, and to a lesser extent, within companies. Services may be targeted to particular groups, such as young people in schools, unemployed adults or low-skilled adults, or they may be open to anyone. While traditional face-to-face interviews are still the way most services are delivered, career guidance services have diversified in the last decades to include remote alternatives, including telephone, instant messaging or video conference.

Source: OECD (2004[1]), *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging The Gap*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264105669-en.

1.1. What share of adults use career guidance services?

Nearly all OECD countries have put in place some sort of career guidance service for adults. These services are provided by a variety of actors, including the public employment service (PES), dedicated public career guidance services, private providers, associations and social partners (see Chapter 2).

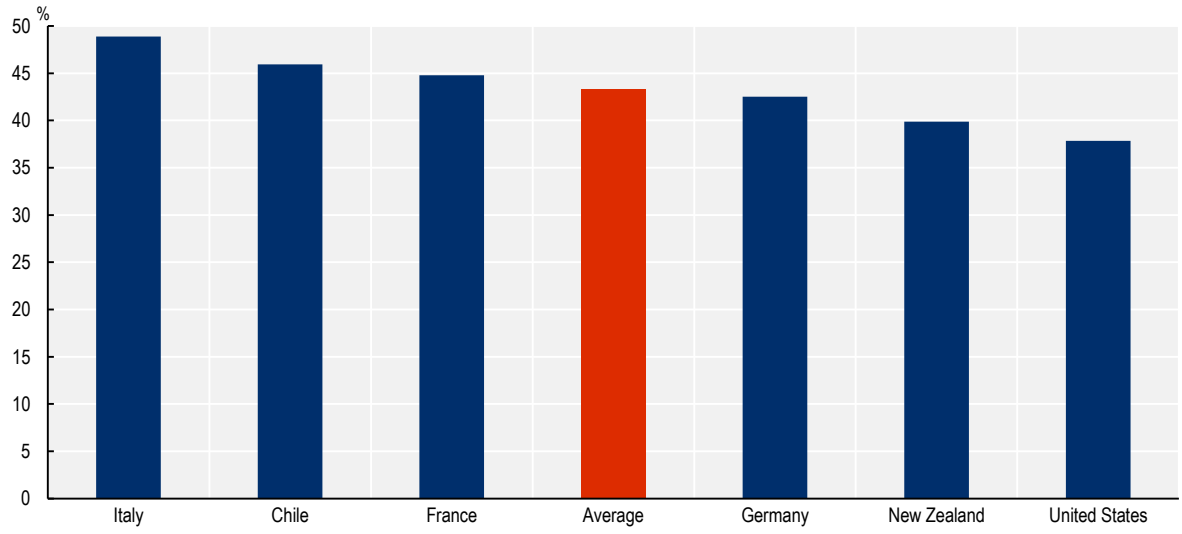
But while services may be available, a key challenge is whether they are accessible and used. Knowing how many people use career guidance services is difficult, considering that very little internationally comparable data exist on the use of career guidance services for adults (see Box 1.2).

To fill this information gap and shed light on the use, inclusiveness and quality of career guidance systems for adults, the OECD carried out in 2020 the Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA) in six OECD countries: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States (see Annex B for more information on the survey methodology).

According to the SCGA, 43% of adults have spoken with a career guidance advisor over the past five years on average across the six countries analysed. Rates span from 38% in the United States to 49% in Italy (Figure 1.1).[2]

Figure 1.1. Use of career guidance services among adults

Percentage of adults who have spoken with a career guidance advisor over the past five years

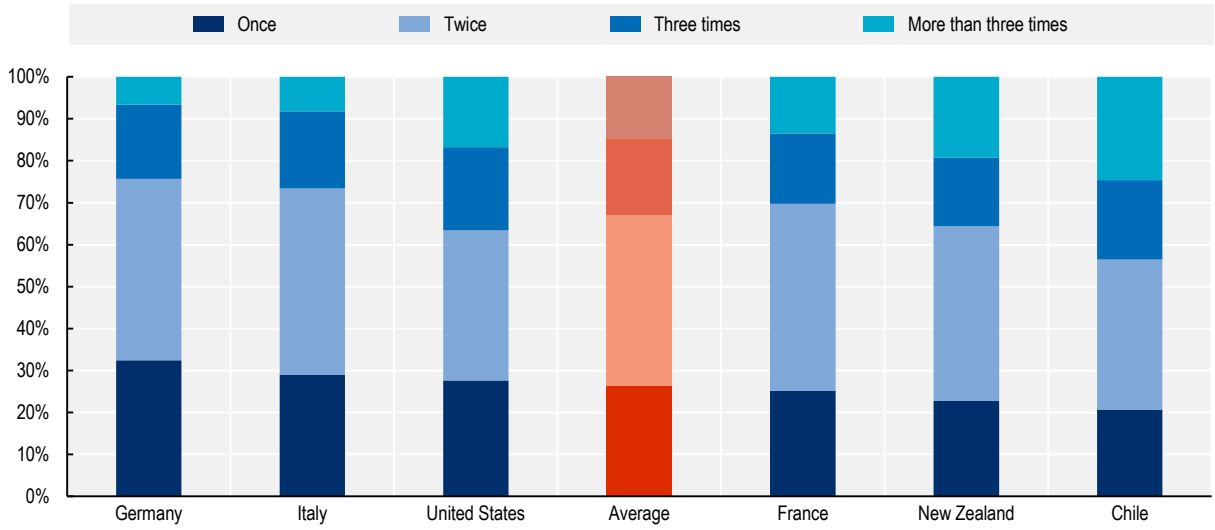


Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

The intensity of service, i.e. the number of interactions that an adult has with a career guidance advisor every year, is another important indicator of how well career guidance services are used. It provides insights on whether there is a follow-up after a first consultation, and if there is continuity in the service delivery. Most adults who use career guidance services have multiple interactions with advisors. Figure 1.2 shows that only one in four adults (26%) who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past year had a single interaction, while 41% had two interactions, and 33% spoke with a career guidance advisor three or more times.

Figure 1.2. Intensity of use of career guidance services among adults

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past year, by number of interactions



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Box 1.2. Internationally-comparable data on the use of career guidance services

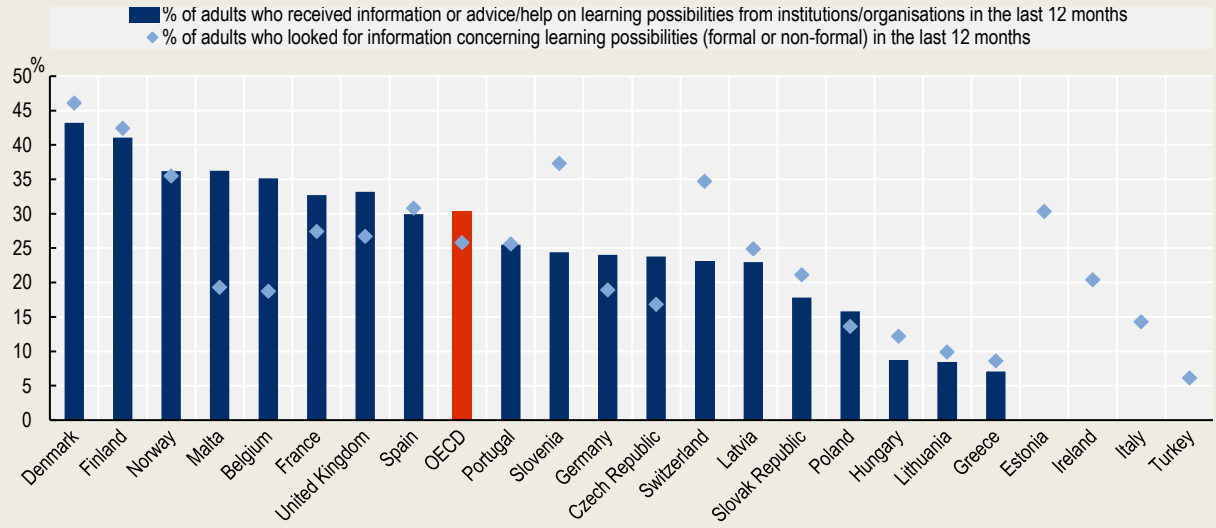
Internationally-comparable data on the use, inclusiveness, and quality of career guidance services is limited. The only available survey is the Adult Education Survey (AES), which covers adults' participation in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal learning) and is one of the main data sources for lifelong learning in the European Union. The AES covers the resident population aged 25-64.

The AES provides two indicators on the use of career guidance services: (i) the share of adults who receive information or advice/help on learning possibilities from institutions/organisations; and (ii) the share of adults who looked for information concerning learning possibilities. The data refer to the 12 months preceding the survey.

Figure 1.3 shows that – on average among OECD countries in the European Union – 30% of adults received information or advice/help on learning possibilities from institutions/organisations over the past year.[1] Rates ranged from less than 10% in Greece, Hungary and Lithuania to over 50% in Austria and Sweden.

Some 27% of adults looked for information concerning learning possibilities over the past year. Rates spanned from less than 10% in Greece, Lithuania and Turkey to over 40% in Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands.

Figure 1.3. Use of career guidance services across OECD European countries



Note: Data refers to the 12 months preceding the survey.
Source: Adult Education Survey 2016. Results elaborated in the OECD Priorities for Adult Learning Dashboard, http://www.oecd.org/employment/skills-and-work/adult-learning/dashboard.htm.

The AES also collects information on the types of providers (e.g. public employment service, education or training institutions), whether the service was offered free of charge, the type of information/advice offered (e.g. skills assessment, recognition of skills, learning possibilities), and channels of delivery (e.g. face-to-face, phone, online).

The AES has some limitations. The survey does not capture the quality of services delivered and only asks about guidance relating to learning, thus excluding guidance relating to occupational choices.

1. The results of the AES are generally aligned with the results of the OECD Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA). The SCGA found that 31% of adults spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past 12 months – very close to the 30% of adults in the AES who received information or advice/help on learning possibilities from institutions/organisations. There is some discrepancy, however, on the second indicator. According to the SCGA, 69% of adults looked online for information on employment, education and training opportunities over the past year – a much higher rate than what is captured in the AES (27%). This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that AES asks only about information concerning learning possibilities, while the SCGA also covers employment opportunities. It may also be due to differences in country coverage between AES and SCGA.

1.2. Are adult career guidance systems inclusive?

To be inclusive, career guidance systems need to be accessible to all, and particularly to those groups most in need of advice – e.g. those who are already struggling in the labour market and/or who need training but are not getting it. These disadvantaged groups include the unemployed who need guidance to look for a job, low-educated adults who may need help to select a relevant training or upskilling programme, migrants who may need to have their qualifications recognised, or older adults with obsolete skills or qualifications who need advice about how to upskill or retrain.

Based on the SCGA, Figure 1.4 shows differences in the use of career guidance services between adults who are already facing disadvantage at work and in training and their more advantaged peers. The largest gaps are found between prime-age adults (25-54) and older adults (over 54) (22 percentage points),

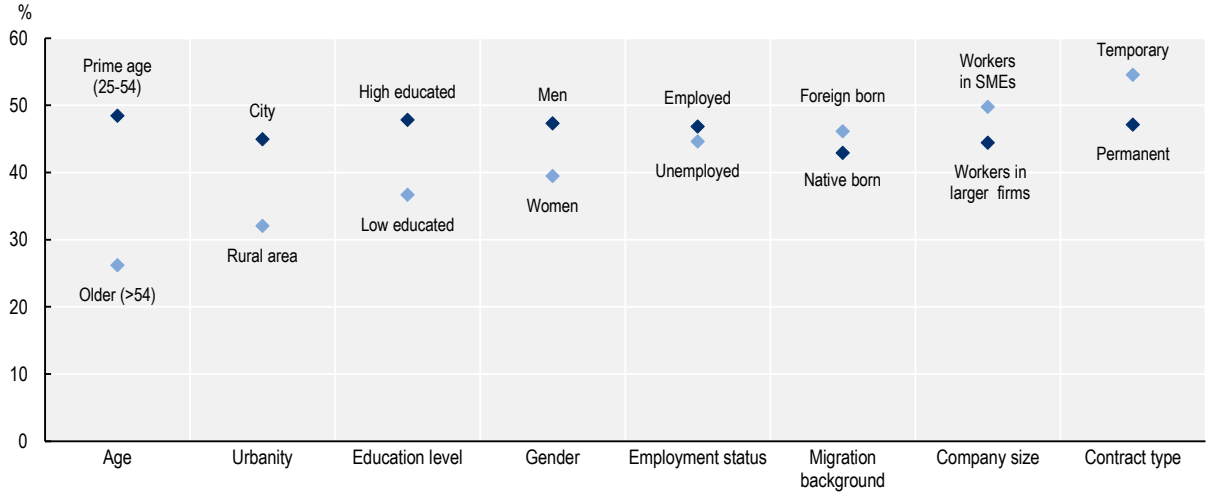
followed by adults living in cities and in rural areas (14 percentage points), high- and low-educated adults (11 percentage point), men and women (8 percentage points) and the employed and the unemployed (2 percentage points).

By contrast, other potentially disadvantaged groups take up guidance more than their counterparts do. This is the case for foreign-born adults, workers in SMEs, and temporary workers, although differences are small (3 percentage points, 5 percentage points, and 7 percentage points, respectively). A tentative explanation is that these groups are proactive in seeking advice and guidance as they have more unstable work conditions. For example, temporary workers are more likely to experience unemployment than permanent workers. SME workers may be interested in moving into more secure, better-paid jobs in a larger firm.[3] Foreign-born adults may need to look for information on how to access language classes, and/or on how to have their qualifications recognised – especially if they recently moved to a new country. Compositional differences may also play a role. For example, temporary workers tend to be younger, on average, than permanent workers. It should also be noted that the results for certain population groups (e.g. foreign born adults) need to be interpreted with caution, due to small sample sizes.

Running a pooled cross-country regression analysis can help to isolate the effect of each of the above factors on the use of career guidance. Table 1.1 shows probit regression results of the use of career guidance on a set of individual, job, and firm characteristics. These results confirm several of the descriptive relationships shown in Figure 1.4: being younger, living in a city, highly educated, and male continue to be the strongest predictors that one will use career guidance. Workers in SMEs continue to have higher likelihood of using career guidance than those in larger firms. Some of the relationships no longer hold, however. In particular, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of career guidance between permanent and temporary workers, or between native-born and foreign-born workers.

Figure 1.4. Use of career guidance services, by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Percentage of adults who have spoken with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by group



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. The sample size of foreign-born adults is smaller than 50 observations in France, Italy and the United States. The sample size of temporary workers is smaller than 50 in Chile, France, Germany, New Zealand and the United States. The low educated group includes adults with a low or medium level of education (i.e. less than a bachelor's degree).
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Table 1.1. Use of career guidance services, by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Marginal effects from a probit regression

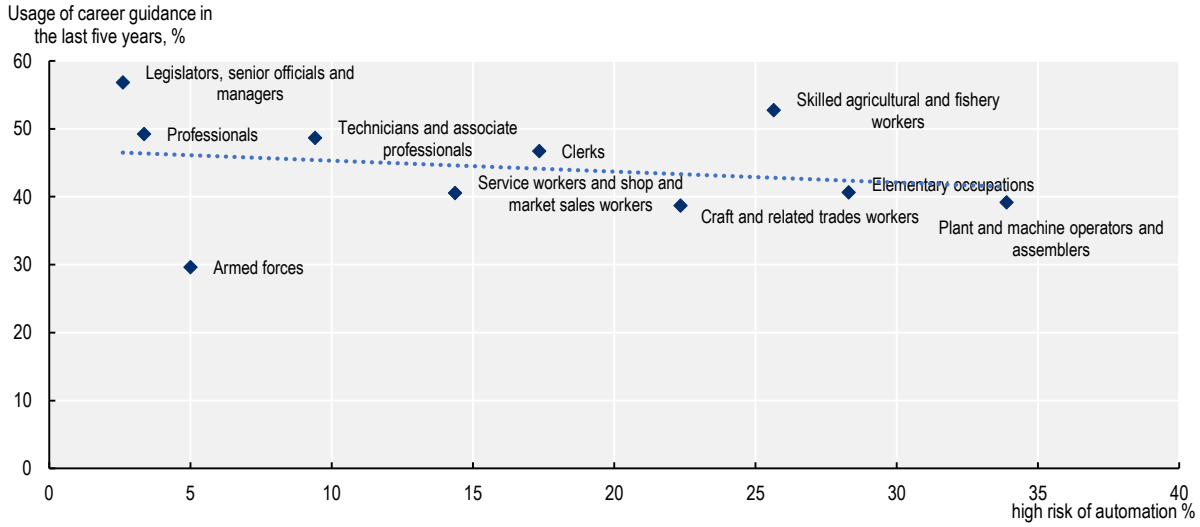
	All respondents	
Age (ref=25-54)		
> 54	-0.191	***
Place of residence (ref=urban)		
Rural area	-0.096	***
Education (ref=high educated)		
Low educated	-1.060	***
Women	-0.068	***
Employment status (ref=employed)		
Unemployed	0.005	
Inactive	-0.069	**
Migration (ref=native-born)		
Foreign-born	-0.003	
Firm size (ref= >250 employees)		
< 250 employees	0.060	*
Contract type (ref=Permanent)		
Temporary	0.050	
Country dummies	Yes	
Occupation dummies	No	
Industry dummies	No	
Observations	5 611	
Pseudo R^2	0.090	

Note: The table reports marginal effects, i.e. percentage change in the outcome variable following a change in the relevant explanatory variable. Marginal effects for categorical variables refer to a discrete change from the base level. *,**,***: statistically significant at the 1%, 0.1%, and 0.01% level, respectively. For firm size and contract type, a dummy variable was created to capture workers who are not employees. Coefficients on this dummy variable are not shown in the table.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

The use of career guidance services also varies across occupations, with persons working in occupations with a high risk of automation using career guidance services less than those in occupations with a lower risk. Figure 1.5 shows that, on average, the use of career guidance is lowest among less-skilled occupations (e.g. craft and related trade workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, services and sales workers, and elementary occupations[4]), where less than 40% of workers spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years. These also tend to be the occupations with a relatively high risk of automation, according to recent analysis (Nedelkoska and Quintini, 2018[2]). The use of career guidance is highest among more skilled occupations with a lower risk of automation such as managers and professionals,[5] where the rate stands at 50% or more.

Figure 1.5. Use of career guidance services, by occupation and risk of automation

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by occupation



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Elementary occupations include: cleaners and helpers; labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport. Professionals include: science and engineering professionals, health professionals, teaching professionals, business and administration professionals, information and communications technology professionals, legal, social and cultural professionals. In each occupation, the sample size in at least one of the six participating countries is less than 50.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA) and Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC).

1.3. Why do adults seek career guidance?

Adults seek career guidance for different reasons, depending on where they are in their career, their employment status, and job ambitions. They may be looking for a new job, need assistance to choose a training or education programme, or may simply be obliged to consult with a career guidance advisor (e.g. to receive unemployment benefits, or if they plan to use subsidised training[6] – see Chapter 2).

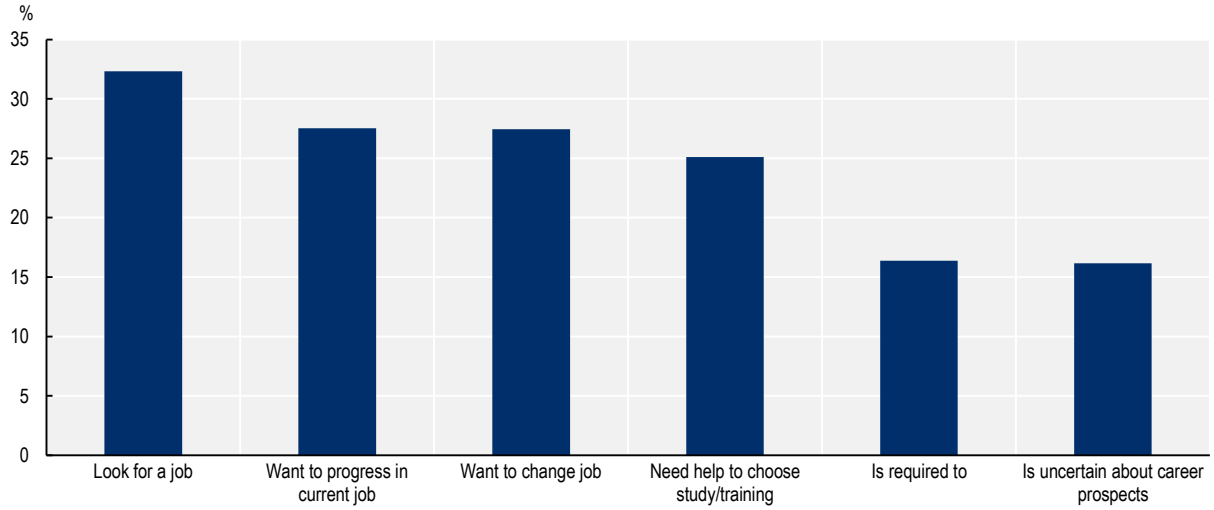
According to the SCGA results on reported reasons for speaking with a career guidance advisor (Figure 1.6):

- The most common reasons are related to job-search assistance: 32% of adults who spoke with an advisor were looking for a job, and 27% wanted to change job (e.g. in a different sector).
- Another common reason is to receive counselling on in-company progression (28% of adults).
- Receiving information on education and training options is another popular reason for seeking career advice (25% of adults).
- Uncertainty about future labour market prospects or being required to use career guidance were the least common reasons (16% of adults each).

Reasons for speaking with a career guidance advisor vary by employment status. For example, the SCGA shows that 72% of the unemployed seek advice to look for a job. About 39% of inactive adults (retirees, or those not working for other reasons) seek advice to look for a job and 29% because they need help to choose a study/training programme. About 37% of all workers (including permanent employees, temporary employees, employees without a contract, and the self-employed) seek advice because they want to progress in their current job and 33% because they want to change job.

Figure 1.6. Reasons for speaking with a career guidance advisor

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by reason

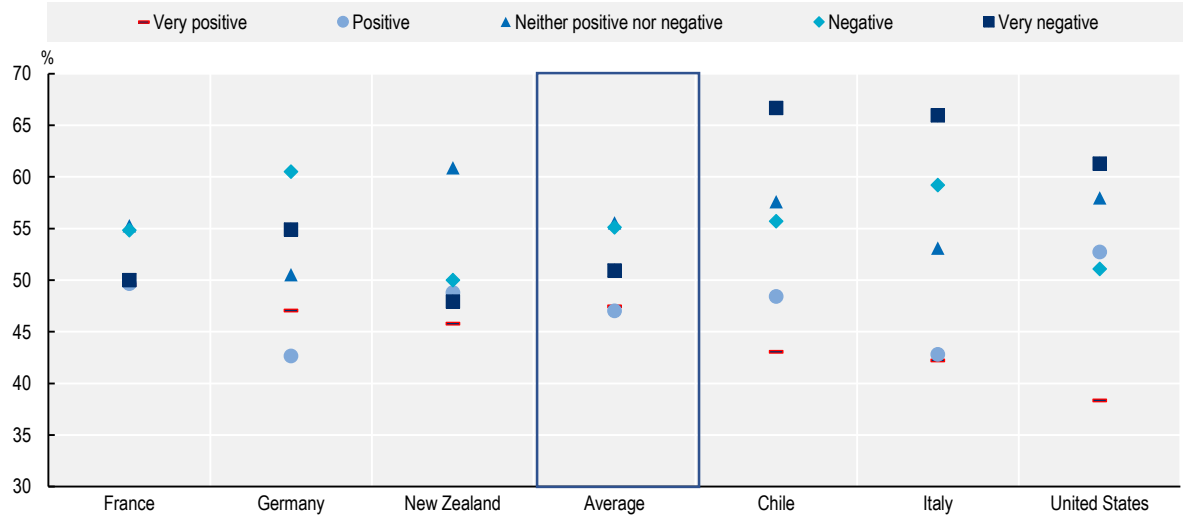


Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refers to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

It could be expected that adults who are more worried about their future career prospects would be more proactive in looking for help from a career guidance advisor. The data seem to corroborate this assumption. The SCGA asked respondents about the future labour market prospects of their current job and sector. Those who were very negative, negative or neutral about their future labour market prospects were more likely to seek advice, on average (Figure 1.7). By contrast, adults who felt positive or very positive were the least likely to speak with a career guidance advisor. That said, this pattern does not hold consistently across all six countries in the survey.[7]

Figure 1.7. Use of career guidance services among adults, at different levels of confidence of future labour market prospects

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by level of confidence about future labour market prospects



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

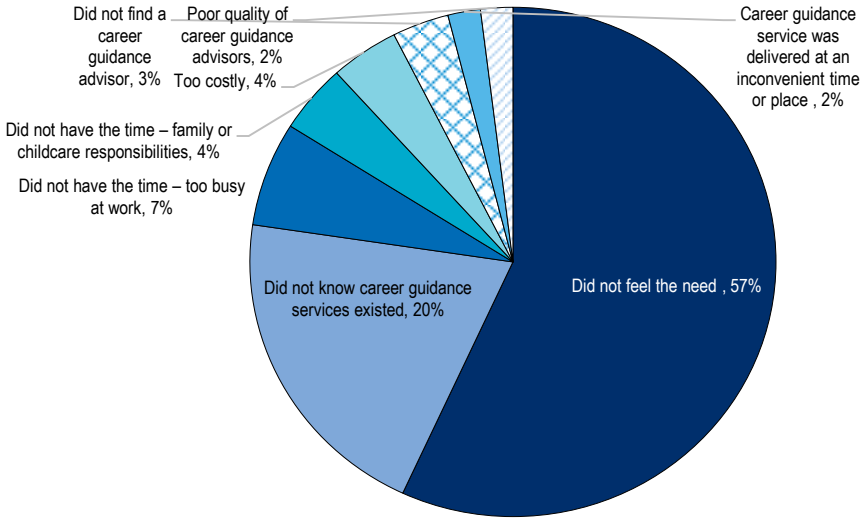
1.4. What are the barriers to using career guidance services?

To increase take-up of existing programmes, it is important to understand the barriers preventing adults from seeking career guidance. Among adults who did not speak with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, 57% simply did not feel the need to (Figure 1.8). It is possible that these adults are already well-placed in their career, are not planning a career shift, or are not interested in exploring up- or reskilling options. It is also possible that they do not fully value or appreciate the potential benefits of receiving career guidance from professional advisors.

Another 20% of adults did not speak to a career guidance advisor because they did not know services existed – suggesting that there is a need to advertise career guidance services more widely. About 11% did not have the time (for work, family or childcare reasons) – suggesting that more could be done to deliver services more flexibly to fit workers' and/or care givers' schedules. The remaining 11% report not using services because they were too costly (4%), they did not find a career guidance advisor (3%), the service was of poor quality (2%), or delivered at an inconvenient time or place (2%).

Figure 1.8. Reasons for not speaking with a career guidance advisor

Percentage of adults who did not speak with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by reason



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Some adults who do not feel the need for guidance are part of vulnerable groups who could potentially benefit from career guidance services. For example, 67% of older adults, 60% of those living in rural areas, and 58% of low-educated adults said that they did not feel the need to speak to a career guidance advisor – higher than their less disadvantaged counterparts (Figure 1.9). However, women, the unemployed, foreign-born adults, workers in SMEs and temporary workers were less likely to say that they did not feel the need to speak to a career guidance advisor than their counterparts.

Figure 1.9. Not feeling a need to speak with a career guidance advisor, by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Percentage of adult non-users who did not feel the need to speak to a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by group

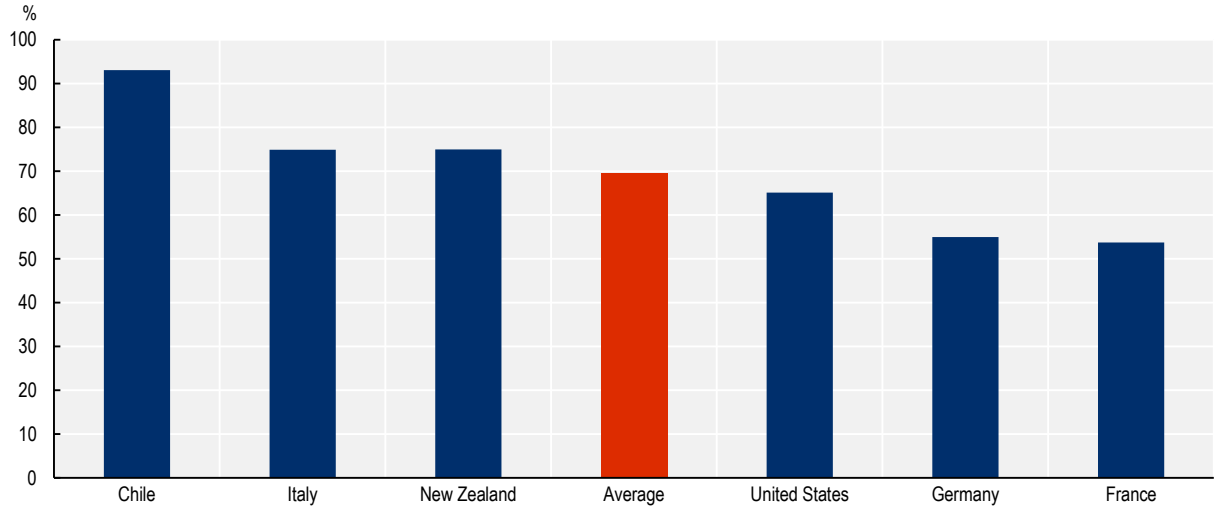
Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. The low educated group includes adults with a low or medium level of education (i.e. less than a bachelor's degree).
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

1.5. What share of adults look online for information on employment and training options?

Before or instead of seeking advice from a career guidance advisor, many adults look independently online for information on employment, education and training opportunities. Although this form of career guidance and advice requires autonomy and initiative from the users, it is generally based on sound and up-to-date information on labour market needs. Based on the SCGA, 69% of adults looked online for information on employment, education and training opportunities over the past five years, with rates ranging from 55% in Germany and France to over 90% in Chile (Figure 1.10).

Figure 1.10. Use of online information

Percentage of adults who looked online for information on employment, education and training opportunities over the past five years



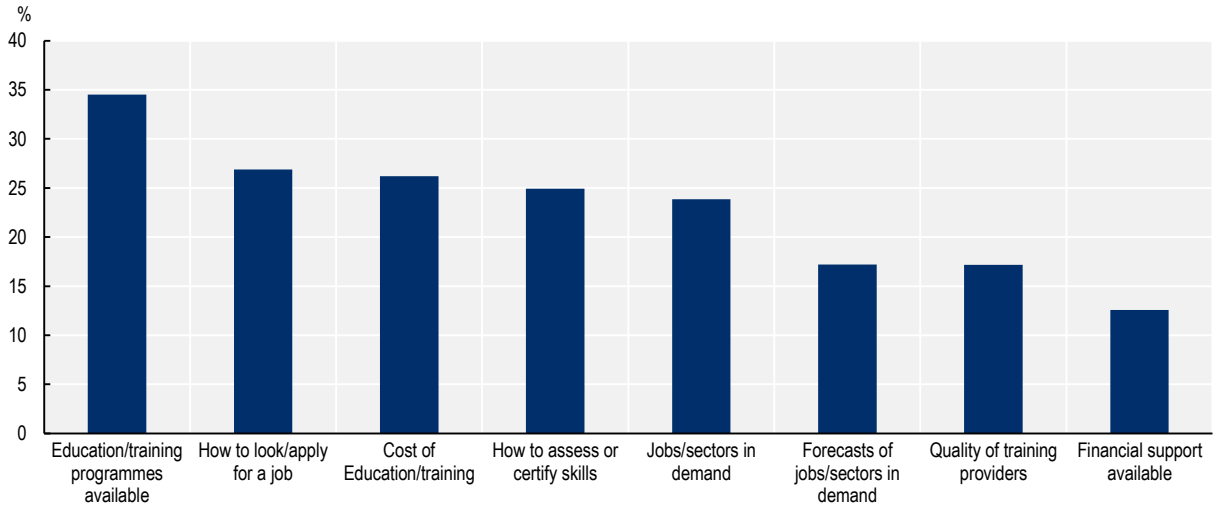
Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Adults look online for information on employment, education and training opportunities for various reasons. While the most common reason to speak to a career guidance advisor is to receive help with a job search, most adults who look for information online are looking for information on education and training programmes. Figure 1.11 highlights the main types of information that adults look for online:

- Most adults look for information about available education and training programmes (about 35% of adults who look online). About a quarter of all respondents are interested to learn more about the cost of education and training programmes (26%). Far fewer adults look for information on the quality of training providers (17%), or the financial support available to meet training costs (13%) – perhaps reflecting the fact that this type of information is rarely available online (see Chapter 2).
- Just over a quarter of adults (27%) look for information on how to search/apply for a job.
- A quarter of adults (25%) look online to understand how to have their skills and competences certified or assessed (e.g. through recognition of prior learning processes).
- Some adults go online to find out about jobs in demand or those forecasted to be in demand (24 and 17%, respectively) – probably with a view to better target their job search efforts or education choices.

Figure 1.11. Type of information sought online

Percentage of adults who looked online for information on employment, education and training opportunities over the past five years, by type of information sought



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

1.6. What share of adults use informal types of career support?

In addition to speaking to a career guidance advisor or looking online for information on employment and training options, many adults use more informal types of career support. They can ask family members and/or friends for advice. They can also engage in different types of career development activities, such as discussing with human resources (HR) professionals at work, visiting a job fair or a training provider.

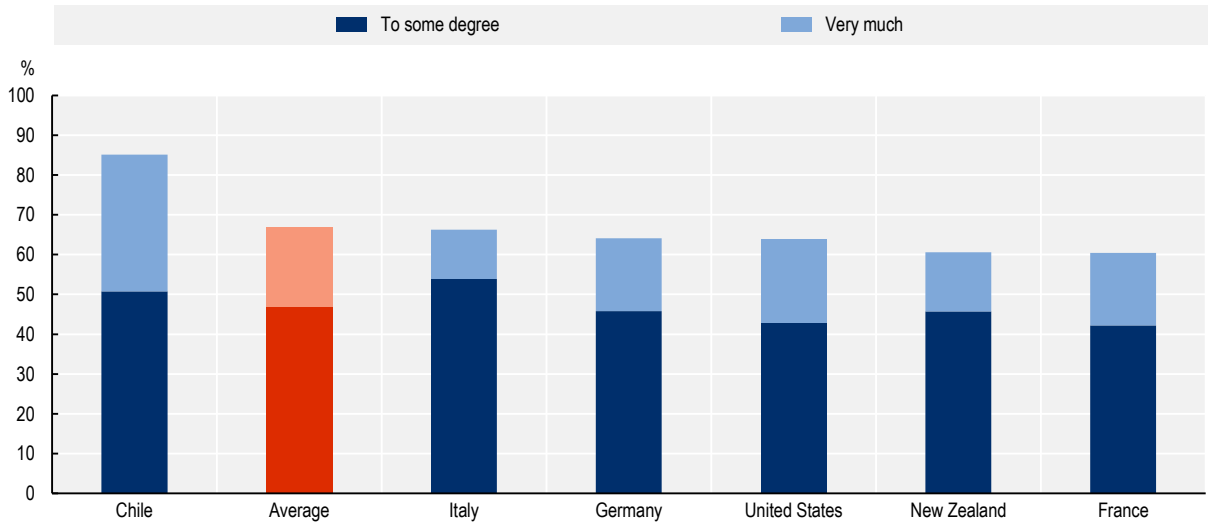
1.6.1. Advice from family members and friends

Family members or friends can be a source of informal advice and career guidance, though such advice is not a substitute for professional career guidance. Advice from family and friends may lack reliability and impartiality, and may fail to take into account an adult's skills, merit, preferences, or labour market needs. Moreover, the usefulness of such advice largely depends on how informed one's friends and family are, which in turn depends on one's socio-demographic background. Adults who are more highly-educated or from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds tend to have networks of family and friends who are better informed and better connected.

The SCGA suggests that the advice of family and friends is an important source of career information for adults. Nearly half of adults (47%) rely "to some degree" on the advice of family and friends to make choices that will affect working life (Figure 1.12). Another 20% relies "very much" on this advice, with this share being the lowest in Italy (12%) and the highest in Chile (34%). Only 13% of adults report that they do "not at all" rely on family and friends for advice.

Figure 1.12. Reliance on the advice of family and friends to make choices that will affect working life

Percentage all adults, by level of reliance



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

1.6.2. Career development activities

Participating in career development activities may allow adults to gain a better understanding of the employment and training opportunities available to them. Examples of career development activities include speaking with HR personnel or a manager at work, visiting a job fair, visiting a training provider, participating in job rotation/work site visits, or doing an internship. These activities may also give adults an opportunity to think more concretely about their skills, ambitions, and career preferences.

More than half of adults (57%) participated in one or more career development activities in the 12 months preceding the survey. The most common activities were speaking with one's manager or HR professionals at work (15%), visiting a job fair (14%), or visiting a training provider (13%). Fewer than 10% of adults participated in workplace career development activities, such as job rotation/work site visits, internships or apprenticeships. Results are quite consistent across the six countries analysed.

1.7. Which types of adults are at risk of being poorly informed?

According to the SCGA, most adults (76%) access information about education and employment opportunities through formal channels, either by speaking to a career guidance advisor or looking online or both. Adults who do not access any formal or informal career support or those who rely solely on informal support may be most at risk of making poor education and employment decisions. This section uses clustering techniques to identify groups of adults who might be at risk of being poorly informed.

Adults in the sample were divided based on their use of different types of career support. Table 1.2 shows the four largest and most meaningful groups for analysis. Adults in Group 1 used all types of career support (both formal and informal). Those in Group 2 did not speak to a career guidance advisor, but looked online for information and made use of informal support (advice from family or friends, or participation in a career development activity). Adults in Group 3 used only informal support, while those in Group 4 did not consult any career support at all.

Table 1.2. Groups of career guidance users

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Spoke to a career guidance advisor	Yes	No	No	No
Looked online for information	Yes	Yes	No	No
Informal support	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Share of the total sample	36%	30%	17%	7%

Note: The columns do not add up to 100% because only the largest and/or most relevant four groups are shown. 'Informal support' includes advice from family or friends or participation in a career development activity, like a job rotation or a job fair.
Data: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Figure 1.12 shows the results of a cluster analysis. The analysis identifies "clusters" of adults in the sample who share similar socio-economic characteristics (i.e. age, gender, place of birth, place of residence, education, and employment status). Groups 1 and 2 include both high-educated and low-educated adults. On the other hand, adults in Groups 3 and 4 tend to be lower educated, older and more likely to live in rural areas. Beyond these broad descriptions, the largest clusters in each group can be characterised as follows:

- Group 1: These adults fall into two main clusters: highly-educated employed men aged 25-54 (representing 42% of this group), and lower-educated workers aged 25-54 (36%).
- Group 2: Adults in this group fall into two main clusters, made up mostly of workers: lower-educated native-born women (41%) and highly-educated foreign-born men (38%).
- Group 3: The two largest clusters of adults in this group are made up of lower-educated adults. The first includes non-employed women (47%). The next largest cluster is made up of employed men aged 55+ (27%).
- Group 4: These adults fall into three main clusters, all made up of older, lower-educated adults who are either: employed men living in rural areas (45%), non-employed women (29%), or non-employed men (22%).

There is some variation across countries in the socio-economic characteristics of the largest clusters in each group. Figure 1.14 shows country-level results from a cluster analysis of all adults in Groups 3 and 4 (i.e. those who are most at risk because they did not speak to a career guidance advisor or look online for information). In most countries covered in the survey, these groups tend to be older (age 55+), low-educated and not employed. The exceptions are Chile and France. In Chile, the largest cluster is made up of employed men aged 25-54. In France, the largest cluster is made up of employed low-educated women living in rural areas.

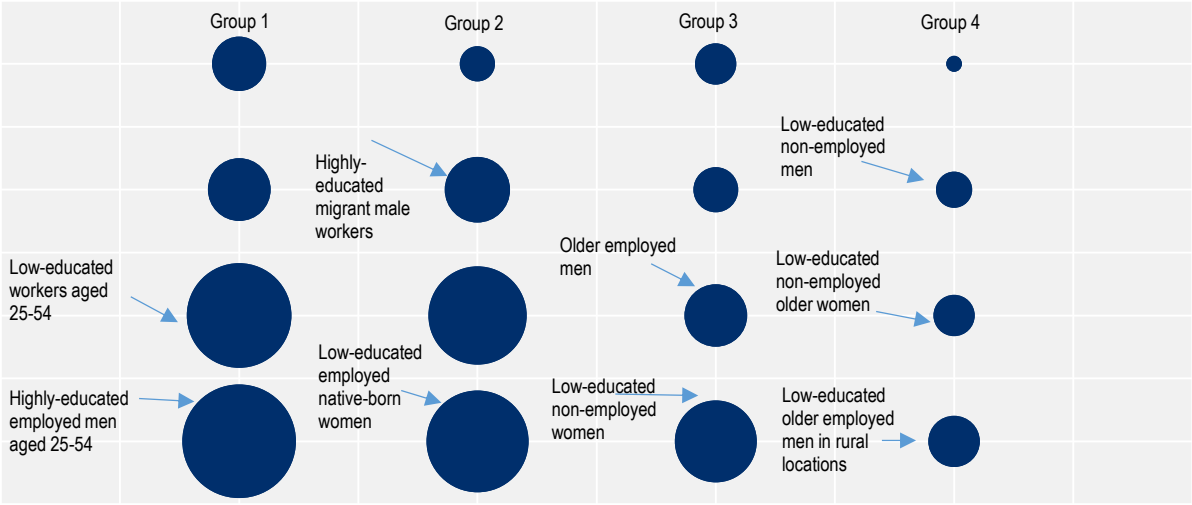
In the United States, in addition to the characteristics mentioned above (older, low-educated, not employed), adults in Groups 3 and 4 also tend to live in rural areas.

In several countries, the second-largest cluster of at-risk adults is employed men. This is the case in Germany, New Zealand (employed male immigrants) and Italy (employed men aged 25-54).

This analysis suggests that in most countries, policy responses to boost access to formal career support should target low-educated and older adults, though individual country policy responses can be more targeted. In the United States and France, policy responses that involve also reaching out to adults living in rural areas would be beneficial. While adults who are not working are most at risk, several countries also have a significant cluster of employed adults who do not access career support. Efforts to connect employed adults with formal career services should focus on employed men in Germany, New Zealand (particularly immigrants), Italy, and Chile. In France, they should focus on employed women.

Figure 1.13. Characterising adults by type of career guidance behaviour

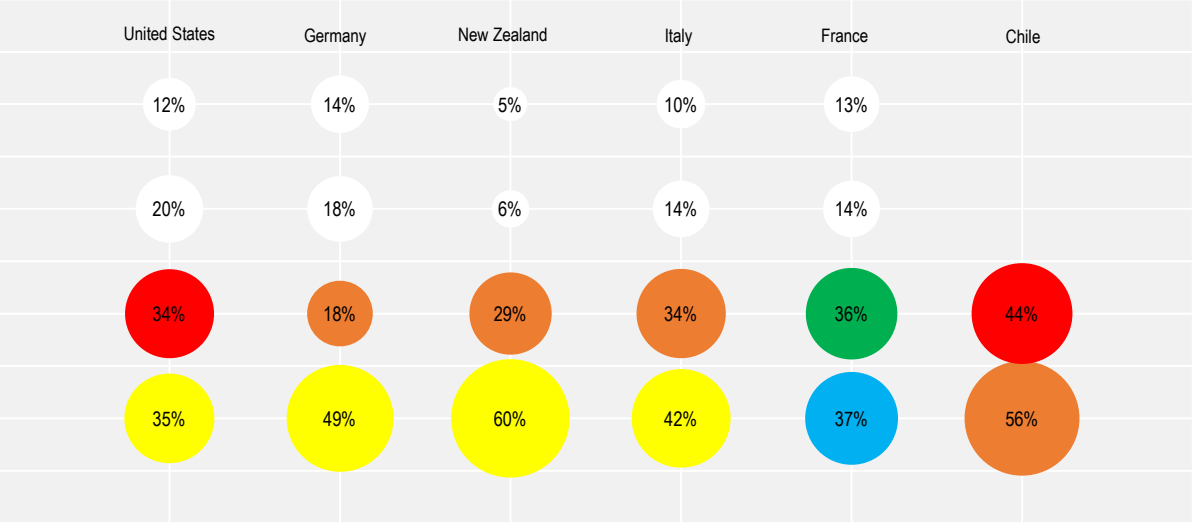
Results of a cluster analysis, share of adults in the sample



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. The size of each circle is proportional to the size of the cluster in the total sample. Only the largest clusters are shown. The clusters shown here represent 91% of the total sample. 'Informal support' includes advice from family or friends or participation in a career development activity, like a job rotation or a job fair.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Figure 1.14. Characterising adults at risk (Groups 3 and 4), by country

Results of a cluster analysis, share of adults in each country who did not speak to a career guidance advisor or look online for information (Groups 3 and 4)



Note: The size of each circle is proportional to the size of the cluster in the total sample. Only the largest clusters in each country are shown. 'Informal support' includes advice from family or friends or participation in a career development activity, like a job rotation or a job fair.
Yellow: Older non-employed adults. Orange: Employed men. Red: Non-employed women. Light blue: Employed women. Green: Older adults living in the city. White: Other (circles represent 20% of group or less).
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

References

Nedelkoska, L. and G. Quintini (2018), "Automation, skills use and training", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 202, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/2e2f4eea-en. [2]

OECD (2004), *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264105669-en. [1]

Notes

[1] Career guidance for adults excludes services for young people who are still in initial education (i.e. who are still studying and have not yet had an employment spell). For example, career guidance services offered in schools fall outside the scope of this report.

[2] The SCGA also collects information on adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor during the 12 months preceding the survey. There is very little substantive difference in responses between adults who used career guidance over the last five years and those who used it over the last year. To benefit from larger sample sizes, therefore, the figures in this report refer to adults who have used career guidance services over the previous five years – unless otherwise specified.

[3] This finding stands in contrast to previous evidence showing that large firms provide more career support than smaller firms. It could be that workers in SMEs are more proactive than those in larger firms in seeking advice independently, given that they receive less career guidance from within their company. Moreover, even if large firms are more likely to offer career guidance services than SMEs, these services tend to target only the 'high-performers' or the high-skilled rather than being open to all employees (see Chapter 2). This could also help to explain the discrepancy.

[4] Elementary occupations include cleaners and helpers; labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport.

[5] As defined by the ISCO-08 major group 2. It includes professionals in various categories: science and engineering; health; teaching; business and administration; information and communications technology; and legal, social and cultural.

[6] In Germany, for example, adults willing to use the training subsidy '*Bildungsprämie'* need to make an appointment with a specially trained counsellor in one of the 530 guidance offices in adult education centres.

[7] It is possible that differences reflect not only different demands from users, but also different country strategies about career guidance (e.g. what services are available and who they target).

2 Providers and service delivery

A variety of providers are involved in delivering career guidance services to adults, including the public employment service, dedicated public career guidance agencies, the social partners, education and training institutions, and private providers. Services can be open to all adults, or target specific population groups. This chapter maps the different career guidance providers and the target groups they typically serve. It analyses the ways services are delivered (such as face-to-face, online, by telephone or instant messaging) and how they are advertised. It explores the role of online career guidance portals. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the changes made to the delivery of career guidance services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Brief

Many types of providers deliver career guidance to adults

In OECD countries, a number of different providers are involved in delivering career guidance services to adults. Services can be open to all adults, or serve specific population groups. They can be delivered through various channels, including face-to-face, by telephone, through instant messaging, or online. Moreover, online career guidance portals – web-based sources of centralised information on jobs and/or training opportunities – exist in many countries. The findings of this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- According to the OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA), the PES is the most used career guidance provider (24% of users), followed by private career guidance providers (22%). Education and training institutions, employers, and dedicated public career guidance agencies (i.e. a provider that specialises in career guidance services and is publicly funded) also play a relatively important role (12-13% each). Employer groups, associations, and trade unions play a smaller role (offering services to 6% of users or less).
- Each type of provider has its strengths and weaknesses. While most adults receive guidance from the PES, it is often under-funded, which constrains over-burdened advisors in their ability to personalise guidance. Private career guidance services may offer more personalised services, but their services may be too costly for certain groups unless subsidised. Trade unions may be in a position to offer advice that is more directly relevant for workers, but may lack expertise and adequate funding.
- Online career guidance portals typically include information on available education and training programmes and current and future job opportunities in the labour market. More rarely they include information on the quality of training providers, the cost of training, and financial support to cover training costs. OECD countries often have several online career guidance portals. Having multiple portals can make it difficult for users to navigate and interpret the wealth of information available. In some countries, online portals do not exist or serve only specific geographical regions. Another issue is access, as those with poor digital skills (often older adults or the low-skilled) may not be able to use online portals.
- The COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant changes in career guidance behaviour. About 24% of respondents accessed career guidance more than usual to navigate changes (e.g. due to job loss or fear of job loss) or because they had more time. A minority of adults (10%) said they could not access career guidance during the crisis because in-person or digital services were not available. On net, these changes likely resulted in an overall increase in the share of adults who use career guidance (from 31% on an annual basis prior to the pandemic, up to 38% during the pandemic).
- Career guidance providers in nearly all OECD countries adjusted how their services were delivered during the COVID-19 crisis. Interventions included the temporary suspension of face-to-face services during lockdowns, the strengthening of distance services (by phone, online), and the development of training tools to help career guidance advisors deliver services from a distance. Online career guidance portals were strengthened and became popular sources of up-to-date information on labour market changes. Early evidence suggests that the inevitable shift to remote delivery of career guidance likely had a small negative impact on employment outcomes of beneficiaries, and worsened access for adults with poor digital skills and those without a reliable telephone or internet connection.

Introduction

Like other areas of adult learning policy, career guidance for adults is delivered by a variety of providers, both public (such as the public employment service, public education and training institutions, and dedicated public career guidance agencies) and private (such as employers, private training institutions, and private providers). This variety enables service delivery tailored to the needs of specific targets groups, but it also makes for a complex and possibly fragmented system that may be difficult to navigate.

Adults arrive at guidance services with different needs and aspirations. They may be unemployed; returning to work after years out of the labour force; employed but at risk of becoming displaced; or employed but looking for a new job. They could be immigrants who wish to have their qualifications recognised in a new country, or young adults who want to develop career management skills to progress in their current job. Each of these users has different guidance needs, requiring different resources and tools.

This chapter maps the key actors responsible for delivering career guidance services to adults in OECD countries, the delivery channels used, how services are advertised, as well as how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the use and provision of services. Section 2.1 maps different career guidance providers and the target groups they typically serve. Section 2.2 analyses the actual and preferred delivery channels of career guidance (e.g. face-to-face, online, by telephone or instant messaging). Section 2.3 highlights how career guidance services are advertised, while Section 2.4 provides evidence on how adults select one provider over another. Section 2.5 looks at the role and limitations of online career guidance portals. Finally, Section 2.6 provides an overview of the changes made to the delivery of career guidance services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in the use of those services.

2.1. Which types of providers deliver career guidance services to adults?

In most OECD countries, career guidance is delivered by a range of providers, including the public employment service (PES), dedicated public career guidance agencies, private providers (e.g. coaches), education and training institutions, as well as social partners. Some types of providers make their services open to everyone; other providers serve specific target groups, such as the unemployed, older adults, or workers at risk.

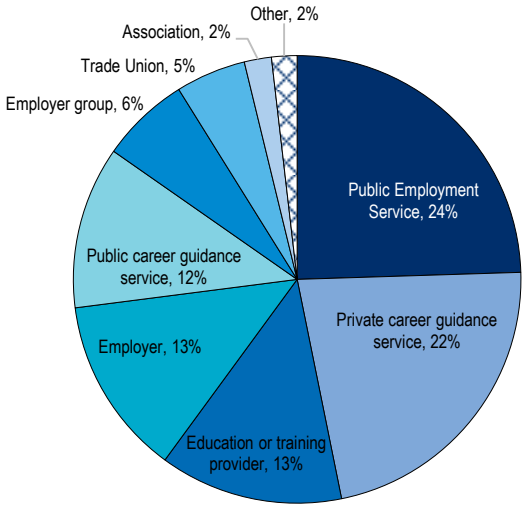
This section maps different career guidance providers and the target groups they typically serve. It discusses broadly the strengths and weaknesses associated with each type or provider.

2.1.1. Overview of providers

Across the six countries analysed in the SCGA, Figure 2.1 provides an overview of who provides career guidance service. It shows that almost a quarter (24%) of adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past five years used a service offered by the PES, like *Pôle Emploi* in France, the American Job Centres in the United States, or the *Bolsa Nacional de Empleo* in Chile. Another 22% consulted a private provider, such as private coaches. Around 13% consulted an education and training institution (e.g. university, school) and another 13% spoke to a career guidance advisor linked with their employer. Around 12% of adults relied on dedicated public career guidance agencies (i.e. a provider that specialises in career guidance and is publicly funded) such as the *Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle* in France. The remaining 15% of adults consulted other providers, such as an employer group, a trade union or an association (e.g. a non-governmental organisation, NGO).

Figure 2.1. Providers of career guidance services for adults

Percentage of all adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by provider



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Some differences exist across countries.[1] While use of a given provider depends on provider characteristics like accessibility, affordability, and the quality of services offered, contextual factors also play a role. For example, unemployment rates, the generosity of unemployment benefits, and eligibility criteria for receiving unemployment benefits (e.g. frequency of contact with PES) could influence the role that the PES plays as a career guidance provider in a given country. As another example, the availability of public subsidies (e.g. vouchers) to help individuals cover the cost of private career guidance may favour the proliferation and use of a private market of career guidance providers (see Chapter 4).

2.1.2. Public employment services

In many countries, the PES is one of the main actors responsible for delivering career guidance services to adults. In addition to matching and placement, one of the roles of PES advisors (or caseworkers) is to accompany clients in their job search efforts. This involves assessing clients' skills, suggesting available training options, teaching job search skills, giving referrals to other services, and providing information on current and future skill needs in the labour market.

Eligibility for accessing PES career guidance services varies across OECD countries. PES counselling services can be open to the unemployed, to certain target groups (e.g. the low-skilled or workers at risk of being dismissed), or some or all of their services could be open to everyone regardless of employment status or education background.

In some countries (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Poland, and Sweden), being registered as unemployed is a necessary condition for accessing PES career guidance. In Portugal, for instance, career guidance services offered by the PES are only open to unemployed adults enrolled with the job centres. Attending PES career guidance may even be mandatory for certain groups of unemployed. For example, it is common that the unemployed must attend career guidance in order to receive or continue receiving unemployment benefits.

Other OECD countries further restrict access to intensive PES counselling services to the unemployed most in need of help (Desiere, Langenbucher and Struyven, 2019[1]; OECD, 2015[2]). This is often done

with the objective of using resources efficiently, reducing costs, and saving PES caseworkers' time for more difficult cases. PES in these countries often use profiling tools to identify eligible clients and determine the timing and frequency of required contact with caseworkers.[2] For example:

- In **Greece**, career guidance is provided only to unemployed persons classified as high risk, namely jobseekers who have no occupation or whose occupation is no longer in demand in the labour market.
- In the **Netherlands**, only jobseekers with a statistical profiling score lower than 50 (out of 100) are invited to a face-to-face interview with a caseworker early on. Lower scores indicate a lower likelihood that the jobseeker will return to employment quickly. Jobseekers with a score higher than 50 are initially referred to digital services, but will also be invited for a face-to-face interview after six months of unemployment (Desiere, Langenbucher and Struyven, 2019[1]).
- In **Ireland**, the PES differentiates between jobseekers who have a "low", "medium" or "high" likelihood of finding a job within 12 months – using the Probability of Exit (PEX) model. One-to-one meetings with a caseworker shortly after registration at the PES are reserved to jobseekers (aged 25 and above) with a low or medium PEX score.[3]

PES counselling services can also target groups beyond the unemployed population – such as workers at risk. For example, in **Slovenia**, job seekers whose employment contract will be terminated in the next three months can access PES career counselling and training in career management skills. Similarly, in **Spain**, PES professional guidance is open to vulnerable workers, including people made redundant in company restructuring processes, workers who earn less than the minimum wage, as well as people in domestic work or taking care of dependents. The **Estonian** PES offers the Work and Study programme to employed people who need support in changing job or remaining employed. Under this programme, workers who wish to use the study allowance or the training card system to fund their training must first meet with a specialised guidance advisor.[4]

In some countries, the PES has extended services to all adults regardless of employment status, including employed workers who want to progress in their career or change job. This is the case for countries like Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Japan, Lithuania, and the United States. To give some examples, anyone in **Japan** can access one-on-one career consultation sessions at PES offices for free. In **Estonia** the PES programme *'Karjäärinõustamine'* offers access to career counselling service free of charge to all people. The **Austrian** PES offers career guidance in 72 of its 100 regional offices. These special units within the regional departments are called Career Guidance Centres (*BerufsInfoZentren*, BIZ), and all people living in Austria are eligible to receive services, be they employed, self-employed, unemployed or inactive. In the **United States**, there are no eligibility requirements for career guidance offered by American Job Centres. Similarly, in **Lithuania**, the PES provides career guidance to both unemployed and employed persons (see Box 2.1 for more details).

Expanding PES guidance services to all adults requires additional resources, and careful consideration must be given to whether the PES has sufficient capacity to offer high-quality services to all adults. In **Germany**, a law adopted in 2018 (Law on improvement of qualifications opportunities) expanded the legal mandate of the Federal Employment Agency to provide career guidance services to employees (CEDEFOP, 2020[3]). Before expanding services at the national level, Germany first implemented pilots in selected regions to better understand the types of additional resources that would be needed. To meet the increased demand for career guidance services, the German PES intends to hire and train additional guidance staff, develop networks with other players in the career guidance space, and make use of online career guidance tools (OECD, forthcoming[4]).

Box 2.1. PES career guidance services open to all adults regardless of employment status

Austria

In Austria, the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) has a legal mandate to provide career guidance. AMS offers information, counselling and advice in career information centres (*BerufsInfoZentren*, BIZ). Anyone can go to a BIZ to receive information and personal one-on-one advice about occupations, education and career. People can clarify their interests and aspirations, e.g. via a test of interest. Individuals can access job information brochures, video stations and computers, as well as personal support in using these tools. The BIZ regularly organises events on many topics related to the job market, occupations and education. All services are free of charge.

Belgium (Flanders)

The Flemish public employment service (VDAB) facilitates access to career guidance for both unemployed and employed adults. Every citizen regardless of employment status can visit the VDAB regional office. Career guidance services for the employed or self-employed are coaching-oriented, while services for the unemployed are focused on providing support to identify and pursue a career path, and on filling existing skills gaps in the labour market. Advice is given in different formats, including face-to-face, telephone, video-chat, email, or through an app.

Estonia

In Estonia, career guidance advisors work in the offices of *Eesti Töötukassa* (the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund). Everybody can get career counselling and the service is free for all. Counselling focusses on an adult's work or study objectives and is carried out either individually or in groups. The career guidance advisors also help people understand changes that are taking place in the labour market and accordingly discuss together different options for the individual's career. The service is co-funded by the European Social Fund.

Hungary

By law, every Hungarian citizen has the right to access PES services – including career guidance services – regardless of employment status. The PES uses call centres to reach a higher number of clients and provide more individualised support. PES provides free phone-based guidance, mobile phone texts to communicate on job vacancies, web consulting, and videoconferences. Employed adults can access PES guidance services without registration.

United States

American Job Centres – coordinated by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) – provide a full range of assistance to all jobseekers under one roof. Established under the Workforce Investment Act, and reauthorised in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014, the centres offer career counselling, as well as training referrals, job listings, and similar employment-related services. Users can visit a centre in person or connect to the centre's information online or through remote access. There are no eligibility requirements for career guidance and services are provided at no cost to participants. The unemployed are targeted for services, but employed individuals may also access the services. The centres are a central access point for a variety of publicly funded education and training services.

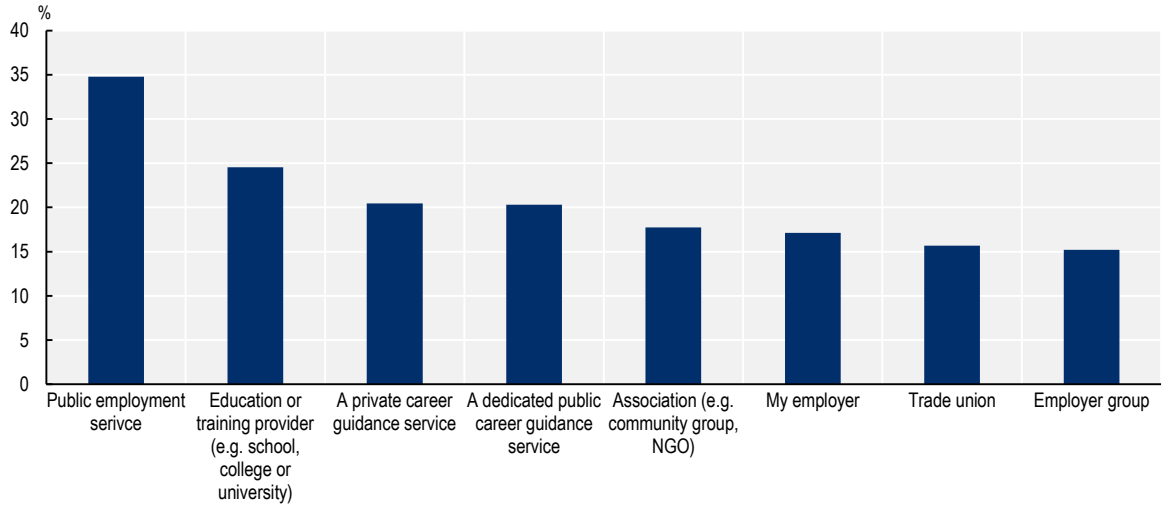
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults', Labour Market Service Austria, https://www.ams.at/.

Despite playing a crucial role in career guidance provision, the PES faces limitations. It often suffers from a shortage of career guidance advisors and under-funding, which could undermine the PES' ability to deliver high-quality career guidance services. The number of unemployed per PES office varies across countries, with fewer than 1 000 unemployed per office in France, Germany, Hungary and New Zealand, and 8 000 or more unemployed per office in the Netherlands, Chile, Mexico and Turkey (OECD/IDB/WAPES, 2016[5]). When PES career guidance advisors are overloaded, under-funded and work under pressure, they may not have sufficient time per case to advise clients, and could lack the necessary time and other resources to devote to difficult cases.

Perhaps related to the above challenges, dissatisfaction with services received from the PES is relatively high, according to results from the SCGA (Figure 2.2). Despite being the most frequently used provider of career guidance, the PES has the highest share of users (35%) who report being 'not at all satisfied' or only 'somewhat satisfied' with the career guidance service they received – compared with 25% or less for other types of providers.

Figure 2.2. Dissatisfaction with career guidance services, by provider

Percentage of adults who are not at all satisfied or only somewhat satisfied with the career guidance received, by provider



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

PES career guidance advisors are not always well-equipped with necessary training to guide adults in their training and career decisions. Caseworkers often do not receive specialised training in providing career guidance (see Chapter 3), they may not understand the rapid changes that are taking place in the labour market, and may be ill-equipped to advise adults accordingly.

Related to this, compensation incentives of PES career guidance advisors can create pressures to get unemployed individuals into employment (and off benefit) as quickly as possible, instead of addressing longer-term goals linked to sustained employability (OECD, 2015[6]; Borbély-Pecze, 2019[7]). This could generate significant tensions between the interests of career guidance advisors and the long-term career goals of the unemployed.

Being required to speak with a caseworker – rather than doing so voluntarily – may also reduce adults' satisfaction with PES counselling. As noted above, career guidance is sometimes a mandatory condition

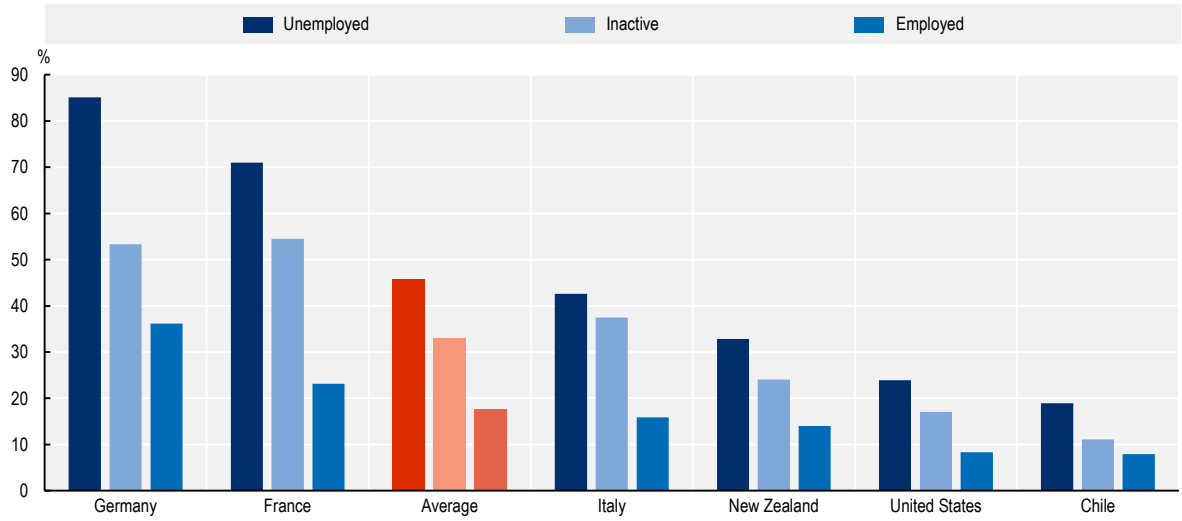
for receiving unemployment benefits. But evaluations of experiments with Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) in the United States showed that take-up of ITAs was lower when counselling was mandatory, while the best results were obtained where counselling was offered on a voluntary basis without being too directive (Gautié and Perez, 2012[8]).

Furthermore, PES caseworkers may not have the specialised knowledge to provide adequate support to all groups, particularly the employed. For the most part, the bulk of the PES career guidance advisors' work revolves around the unemployed and inactive, while employed workers are given lower priority. The SCGA shows that on average, 46% of unemployed adults spoke to a PES career guidance advisor over the past five years, compared with 33% of inactive adults and only 18% of employed adults (Figure 2.3). Anecdotal evidence and country-level data confirm that employed adults generally fall outside the remit of the PES, or make up only a small percentage of clients using the PES. In Japan, for example, only a third of all adults registered at the PES (*Hello Work*) were employed in 2018 (OECD, 2021[9]).

Even if services are free, employed workers may be less inclined to go to the PES if it is not perceived to offer high-quality services that can accommodate the needs of employed or high-skilled workers. For career guidance offered by the PES to be useful for all adults, PES counsellors need to be trained on how to provide guidance to workers who might have different needs than the unemployed population.

Figure 2.3. Use of PES career guidance, by employment status

Percentage of adults who spoke with a PES career guidance advisor over the past five years, by employment status



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor. The employed include permanent employees, temporary employees, employed without a contract, and self-employed. The inactive include retirees, those not working due to other reasons (e.g. looking after children, studying, illness or disability), and others. Employment status refers to when the person spoke to the career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

2.1.3. Private career guidance providers

About 22% of adults use career guidance services delivered by private career guidance providers (Figure 2.1). Adults who are not eligible for free guidance provided by the PES (e.g. employed adults in many countries), or those who perceive PES guidance to be of low quality, may turn to private career guidance providers as an alternative. Unless subsidised, career guidance from private providers may be costly and out of reach for certain groups, notably the unemployed or low-income workers. Several

countries contract part or all of their job search assistance for unemployed persons to publicly-funded private career guidance providers (e.g. **Australia**, the **Netherlands**, **France** and some states in the **United States**) (Behaghel et al., 2014[10]).

It can be difficult for adults to assess the quality of independent private career guidance providers. Chapter 3 discusses the use of quality standards, and professional certifications to signal that an advisor has the qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge to provide high-quality career guidance. Several countries also publish registers of qualified private career guidance providers (see Section 2.3).

2.1.4. Education and training institutions

Education and training institutions also offer career guidance services. A review of lifelong guidance practices found that guidance in adult education institutions takes three forms: pre-entry guidance which supports adults to participate in adult learning and to decide which programme would be right for them; guidance built into the core of the programme; and exit guidance which supports graduates in applying what they have learned and in supporting their progress in further learning and work (Hooley, 2014[11]). According to the SCGA, about 13% of adults use these services when making training and education choices (Figure 2.1).

A key issue with career guidance services offered by education and training providers is lack of objectivity. For example, education and training institutions have incentives to direct prospective students towards programmes offered at their own institution, even if a programme in another institution would be a better fit. There also tends to be a bias in favour of general education as opposed to vocational pathways, especially when career guidance is provided by teachers.

Furthermore, the availability and quality of guidance services varies significantly from one education and training institution to the next. In **Italy**, for example, each university has its own information and career guidance system, and services vary from simple information on courses available, to support and structured career guidance in the choices of courses and job opportunities. Therefore, whether and how career guidance is delivered depends on each university (OECD, 2017[12]). Similarly, in **Germany**, career guidance provided by the education sector (schools, universities, adult learning providers) is heterogeneous because it is the competence of the Lander (state), the municipality or the individual training provider. Regional university laws exist in the 16 Landers (states) which regulate career guidance in universities (CEDEFOP, 2020[3]). In **Portugal**, higher education institutions have the autonomy to decide on the provision of career guidance services for their students. In **Slovenia**, there are career centres at all universities providing information and counselling, but the quality of services varies as there is no central regulation (CEDEFOP, 2020[13]).

2.1.5. Employers

Employers are well-placed to provide career guidance to workers when it comes to career development opportunities within the firm. They can help employees to reflect on their career aims; assist them to identify what training they need in order to advance in their careers; and provide information about agencies that can provide further guidance.[5] In practice, about 13% of adults who received career guidance over the past five years spoke to an advisor belonging to their employer (Figure 2.1).

Few companies have established processes to deliver career guidance services to their workers. Where initiatives are in place, they are usually focused on key high-potential or 'talent' groups of employees, such as the high-qualified or best performers (CEDEFOP, 2008[14]). Most employees are expected to take responsibility for their own career development.[6]

Larger firms are generally more likely to fund career development than smaller firms. Provision in SMEs is more often informal and dependent on the goodwill of individual managers. By contrast, in larger firms systematic approaches are more common. In the Netherlands, for example, large companies set up

mobility centres where workers can have their skills assessed and receive guidance on how to advance to new positions inside or outside the company (CEDEFOP, 2020[15]).

Although international data on firms' provision of career guidance is not available, national-level surveys find evidence for greater career development support in larger firms. For example, in **Korea**, only 2% of small firms (1-49 employees) implemented career counselling as a programme for career development, compared to 20% of medium-sized firms (50-249 employees) and 28% of large firms (250+) in 2015 (OECD, 2020[16]). Similarly, in **Japan**, large firms are more likely to provide career guidance to workers: 65% of firms with more than 1 000 employees have put in place a system of career counselling, compared to less than 40% among firms with 300 employees or less (OECD, 2021[9]).[7]

There is also an issue with the quality and objectivity of the guidance provided by employers. Indeed, much career guidance provided by firms is job- or company-focused rather than addressing the longer-term development of the employee. While internal career guidance advisors may be well aware of opportunities within the firm, they may not be up to date when it comes to external opportunities. They may also have an incentive to withhold information on external opportunities, for fear that a productive worker may leave the company for other opportunities.

Legal frameworks in OECD countries generally do not impose any legal requirement on employers to provide career guidance services to workers. Replies to the OECD 2020 policy questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults' show that only four OECD countries – Belgium, France, Japan, and Korea – impose a legal obligation on firms to provide career guidance to (some) workers:

- In **Belgium**, firms are obliged by law to provide outplacement services – including career advice – to certain employees in case of collective lay-off or company restructuring, with the aim to help workers find a new job.
- In **France**, the Labour Code provides for a professional interview every two years between the employee and the employer. This mandatory meeting is intended to help the worker consider the prospects for professional development and training. During the meeting, the employer must inform the employees of their right to use the *Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle* (CEP) (see Annex D).
- In **Japan**, the Human Resources Development Promotion Act requires employers to provide information, ensure opportunities for consultation and extend other necessary assistance to its employees, with a view to help workers to set their own goals concerning the development and improvement of their vocational abilities. The government has put in place various support measures to make it easier for employers to comply with the law, for example by offering subsidies, setting up Career Support Centres (see Annex D) and through the self-career dock system (see below). However, there is no penalty for not implementing the law and relatively few employers in Japan provide regular and systematic career guidance to their workers (OECD, 2021[9]).
- In **Korea**, companies with more than 1 000 employees have the legal obligation to provide re-employment support services, including career guidance, to workers aged 50 and over. There are no penalty provisions for non-compliance, but companies must report to the Ministry (competent local labour offices) regarding how re-employment services are delivered, how many people participate, and the outcomes.

Beyond the legal framework, some initiatives are in place in OECD countries to encourage firms or employer groups to be more involved in career guidance. Some of these initiatives are set up and run by the PES, or by the government. For example:

- In **Australia**, the newly established National Careers Institute is working with industry and employers to better understand the changing nature of the workforce and promote opportunities for employee development including upskilling and reskilling opportunities. The National Careers Institute Partnership Grants programme is supporting the delivery of innovative career advisory products and services for people at all stages of their careers. The grants enable employers,

schools, tertiary institutions, industry, governments and researchers to work collaboratively to improve career outcomes and education and training pathways.

- In **Austria**, the PES website provides advice and support to employers on the career development of their employees. It promotes the fostering of employer networks, called "Impulse Qualification Associations", with the objective to jointly plan and implement tailor-made qualification measures for their employees. Another programme promotes further training of low-skilled and older workers with the aim of improving the skills of the workforce. Companies can also receive support in case of unexpected situations, as has been the case during the COVID-19 crisis.
- In **Germany**, following a pilot with SMEs in 2010, the PES launched the Guidance for Upskilling programme (*Qualifizierungsberatung für Unternehmen*) for companies in 2013. There is a focus on SMEs, but larger firms can also access the services. This is a new in-house service delivered by specially trained PES consultants for employers. During the pilot phase, training modules for regional PES managers, team managers and guidance counsellors were developed and implemented. The programme supports employers with a tool for demographic staff analysis, assessment of training needs, selection of training providers and appropriate learning methods, and tracking outcomes from training. In some cases, the training needs of several companies are bundled in the form of upskilling associations (*Qualifizierungsverbaende*). The programme is modularised, i.e. companies can run through all or some of the assessments available (OECD, forthcoming[4]).
- In **Japan**, the government has been encouraging companies in recent years to introduce a system of self-career docks. The Self-Career Dock is a system whereby companies set up opportunities for workers to receive regular career consultations at different points of their careers. This includes both individual counselling and group counselling in career seminars. Interested employers can receive guidance and support, and trained career counsellors can be sent to the firm to assist with the implementation of the system. Moreover, training and supervision can be provided to internal guidance counsellors working in firms that adopt the system. Finally, training can be made available for workers in firms that introduce the self-career dock system in order to raise awareness around the benefits of career guidance. Until 2018, employers who introduced the self-career dock system could receive a government subsidy (OECD, 2021[9]).

2.1.6. Dedicated public career guidance services

Dedicated public career guidance providers are specialised in delivering career guidance and are (at least partly) publicly funded. Relative to the PES which has many roles other than providing of career guidance, dedicated public career guidance services have the advantage of a clearer identity and purpose. They also tend to benefit from stronger links to the labour market, better trained staff, and more impartiality.

Many OECD countries have put in place dedicated public career guidance agencies open to all adults, regardless of employment status, age, or income. Services are (fully or partly) publicly funded and delivered in a variety of ways. The Career Development Support Centers in **Japan** and the Centres ISIO in **Slovenia** are examples of regional/local offices available across the country. Some providers offer counselling from a distance (e.g. by telephone) – like the *Conseil en Evaluation Professionnelle* (CEP) in **France** – and/or a dedicated webpage, such as the National Careers Service in the **United Kingdom**. To ensure that services are accessible to adults from diverse backgrounds, dedicated public career guidance agencies sometimes offer services in different languages. This is the case in the *Cité des métiers* in **Brussels** and the Educational Counselling (*Bildungsberatung Österreich*) in **Austria**. Annex D provides an overview of practices in selected OECD countries.

Some dedicated public career guidance agencies target specific groups, which enables services to be tailored to the needs of groups at risk. For example, targeted career guidance services for older jobseekers are common in OECD countries, including Australia, Korea, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (Box 2.2). Other countries – such as Iceland and Portugal – offer dedicated public career guidance

agencies targeted to the low-skilled/low-qualified (Box 2.2). Career guidance advisors in such agencies are trained to address the specific challenges faced by their target group, and aim to stay well informed about the career and training options available to them.

Box 2.2. Dedicated public career guidance agencies targeted to groups at risk

Older workers

- In **Australia**, the *Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers Program* is designed to give older people – aged between 45 and 70 years – the opportunity to access support and guidance in their career. This includes career assessment, one-on-one career guidance with an advisor and access to skills training to support the person in a current role, a new role, or help to transition to a new career. Delivered across Australia by leading employment and training providers, VERTO and BUSY At Work, the programme is tailored to individual needs, ensuring that the person can learn the skills to stay in the industry they are in or find a new pathway. The programme is run as an initiative of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- In **Korea**, Job Hope Centres for Middle-Aged and Older People are specialised employment services offered for vulnerable individuals aged 40 and over. Job Hope Centres provide a wide range of re-employment services tailored to individual needs, including counselling and guidance services for those who need (re)training before starting their job search, and often lack the basic ICT skills needed to use online services (OECD, 2018[17]). Job Hope Centres are part of the government's efforts to cope with job insecurity among older workers in the context of rapid population ageing and a large number of baby boomers nearing their retirement age. The services are offered free of charge. In 2017, 29 335 people in total used the service.
- In the **Netherlands**, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has introduced a subsidy scheme 'Development Advice for All People Over 45' (Ontwikkeladvies). The programme provides a career guidance subsidy for workers aged 45+ who work at least 12 hours per week. The programme is intended for both workers who are at risk of losing their job and for people who are satisfied with their current job. The advice provides insights on the workers' current job, competences, and future career prospects. It also includes advice on how to reach retirement age while at work, how to prevent absenteeism close to retirement age, and favour a smooth transition into retirement. The selected counsellor is in charge of requesting a subsidy (EUR 600) from the government. The sessions are confidential, and the employer is not informed of the worker's participation in the programme. Guidance can be provided by private career counselling providers or by trade unions. This is a temporary measure, starting from December 2017 until July 2020. 25 800 requests for subsidies were submitted within that period.
- In the **United Kingdom**, the mid-life MOT is free online support to encourage more active planning among older people in the key areas of work, well-being and finances (European Commission, 2020[18]). It is aimed at both individuals and employers to support people over 50. This target group tends to be disproportionally affected by health problems and caring responsibilities which may impact options to get back into work after a break. The mid-life MOT encourages older adults to review their current situation, to consider potential future changes and prepare for them. The support includes the provision of information on different career or skills development perspectives, a skills assessment and advice on health and pension topics.

Low-skilled

- In **Portugal**, *Qualifica Centres*, funded by the European Social Fund and the State, provide information, diagnosis and guidance to all under a lifelong guidance perspective. The services provided by Qualifica Centres are free for individuals. Qualifica Centers (currently 303 in the country) are specialised in adult qualifications, and in providing information and guidance to adults (and young adults) with low educational attainment who are seeking a qualification. These centres provide information, guidance and referral of candidates for training options, as well as for the validation of non-formal and informal learning processes. In 2017, 97 085 candidates were guided to education and training courses/Certified Modular Training or to processes for the Recognition of Prior Learning at Qualifica Centres.
- In **Iceland**, Lifelong Learning Centres provide education and career counselling with a specific focus on low skilled adults. A key strength of the centres are the skills of their staff: guidance advisors typically have a diploma or a master's degree in education or vocational counselling. The objective is to strengthen the variety and quality of education and encourage general participation in lifelong learning and education. The reach of the centres is broad: there are dozens of Lifelong Learning Centres around the country including in sparsely populated areas, which conduct around 10 000 guidance counselling sessions with adults with low qualification levels per year. The annual budget for career guidance delivered to low-qualified adults at regional lifelong learning centres is approximately 134 100 000 ISK (EUR 850 000, 2016). All adults over 20 are eligible, but preferential support is given to low-qualified workers in the tourism sector; low-qualified workers in SMEs; low-income workers; the unemployed with a particular focus on the long-term unemployed.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

2.1.7. Trade unions

Trade unions may be in a position to offer advice that is directly relevant for workers. They are close to the needs of workers and can potentially help individuals progress in their company, industry or sector. Unlike other providers that may have vested interests (e.g. employers, PES, or training institutions), trade unions are the institutions working directly in the interest of employees.

Across OECD countries, the involvement of trade unions in career guidance takes different forms. Trade unions can be involved in the direct provision of career counselling to workers; the development of awareness campaigns; or the referral to external career guidance services. Trade unions can also play an advocacy role, by influencing policy making on career guidance issues.

In a few OECD countries, trade unions themselves have become major players in providing counselling in the workplace. In the **Netherlands**, trade unions offer "career guidance information points" in all 35 labour market regions. In **Spain**, one of the largest trade unions (*Unión General de Trabajadores de España* – UGT) has implemented specific career guidance programmes for employed and unemployed workers. In **Sweden**, some trade unions offer career guidance and counselling as a free service to their members.

Trade unions have also organised dedicated structures for career guidance in some countries, with clear objectives and functions. Some good practice examples include:

- The **Icelandic** Confederation of Labour has developed an Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC), which – among other activities – coordinates the development of career guidance services in cooperation with accredited educational providers around the country (OECD, 2019[19]). For individuals belonging to the ETSC's target group, guidance and counselling are free of charge.

- In the **United Kingdom**, Unionlearn – the learning and skills organisation of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) – has Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) whose role is to promote the value of learning among workers; offer information, advice, guidance; carry out initial assessments of skills; link learners up with providers; and arrange learning/training.
- In the **Netherlands**, the trade union CNV established James Career (https://jamesloopbaan.nl), a programme that aims to contribute to career awareness and competence development of workers. The programme provides career guidance, organises awareness campaigns, refers workers to relevant training programmes, and keeps track of recent research and scientific evidence to help workers navigate changes taking place at the workplace. The programme works with certified coaches.

The career guidance services that trade unions offer are sometimes activated at critical points in the worker's career (e.g. in case of mass lay-offs or company restructuring processes). For example, in **Sweden**, the Job Security Council – a non-profit foundation composed of representatives of trade unions and employers organisations – provides guidance to workers who are made redundant through collective dismissals, with the aim to help them find new employment.[8]

Another more indirect way in which trade unions can inform workers about training and career options is through information campaigns. While information campaigns do not provide personalised, one-on-one advice to individuals, they serve a similar goal of traditional career guidance. One example is the information campaign jointly initiated by the **Swedish** Trade Union Confederation and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, which aimed to make union members aware of the upskilling options available to them.

Trade unions can also play an important role to refer workers to other career guidance services available in the country or region. In these cases, the role of trade unions consists in redirecting workers to the right providers. For example, in **Norway**, trade unions raise awareness about the national career guidance portal (https://utdanning.no/) among representatives and members. Similarly, in **Denmark**, the trade union HK Denmark ensures that counsellors are made aware of the national online portal on career guidance[9] (https://www.voksenuddannelse.dk/).

On top of the direct support provided to workers, trade unions also influence policy-making and advocate for better career guidance provision in some countries. In **Ireland**, trade unions advocate for career guidance services for adults. In the **Netherlands**, trade unions both give advice and lobby parliament for more public resources to create a national infrastructure for career guidance.

Despite the potential role that trade unions can play in career guidance, and the good examples cited above, their involvement was found to be low in the countries covered by the SCGA (Figure 2.1). Only about 5% of adults who received career guidance over the past five years spoke to an advisor belonging to a trade union. Moreover, the share of adults who learned about career guidance through a trade union is low (see Section 2.3).

Low involvement of trade unions in career guidance could be due to a number of reasons. Career guidance and training has not traditionally been a key priority area for trade unions. Pressured to prioritise other non-learning related issues (e.g. job redundancy, job contracts) in the context of economic crisis, trade unions may find it challenging to offer high quality career guidance support to workers. Another challenge is lack of funding. A pilot project put in place by trade unions in Austria, 'Trade Union Education Guides', was established to motivate, advise and guide employees in the company. The project was interrupted after one year due to lack of funding. Trade unions representatives may also not be well aware of the training needs of workers and ill-prepared to assist workers in their career decisions.

That being said, trade unions in some OECD countries have taken steps in the right direction to prepare representatives to deliver high-quality career advice. For example, in **Belgium**, the *Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens de Belgique* (ACV/CSC) trains trade union representatives so that they can direct

workers with specific training or career questions towards the right services or providers. In the **United Kingdom**, Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) are entitled to paid time off work for training – which allows them to acquire the necessary skills to carry out their duties.

One final challenge is the limited number of employees who are represented by trade unions. Trade union coverage has been declining across OECD countries in recent years. Furthermore, certain groups of adults (e.g. the unemployed, the inactive) and certain categories of workers (such as workers in SMEs, non-standard or platform workers) are less likely to be covered by trade unions (OECD, 2019[20]) and therefore may not be able to benefit from the career guidance support they provide.

2.1.8. Employer groups

Though not common (only 6% of adult users of career guidance), groups of employers in the same region or sector sometimes coordinate to provide career guidance to their employees. This may be an effective way to support a larger-scale redeployment of workers in cases where a region or sector is particularly affected by structural change. For example, when **Australia**'s car manufacturing industry was closing, employers in the industry partnered with the Australian Government to provide career guidance, training and recognition of prior learning to workers in the industry. With this support, 84% of former workers found new employment or had retired by the time the industry closed in 2017 (OECD, 2018[21]). In the **Netherlands**, the sectoral fund for the metal industry (*Opleidings- en Ontwikkelingsfonds voor de Metaalbewerking*) organises regional information sessions for employees in the sector on changes in the metal industry, such as digitalisation, including demonstrations of new techniques and machines. The sectoral fund helps employees interpret skill assessment and anticipation information so that they are equipped to make informed decisions about their own learning (OECD, 2017[22]).

Given the way that COVID-19 has hit some sectors harder than others, a coordinated sector-based approach may be an effective way to target adults who could benefit from career guidance.

2.2. Which channels are used to deliver career guidance?

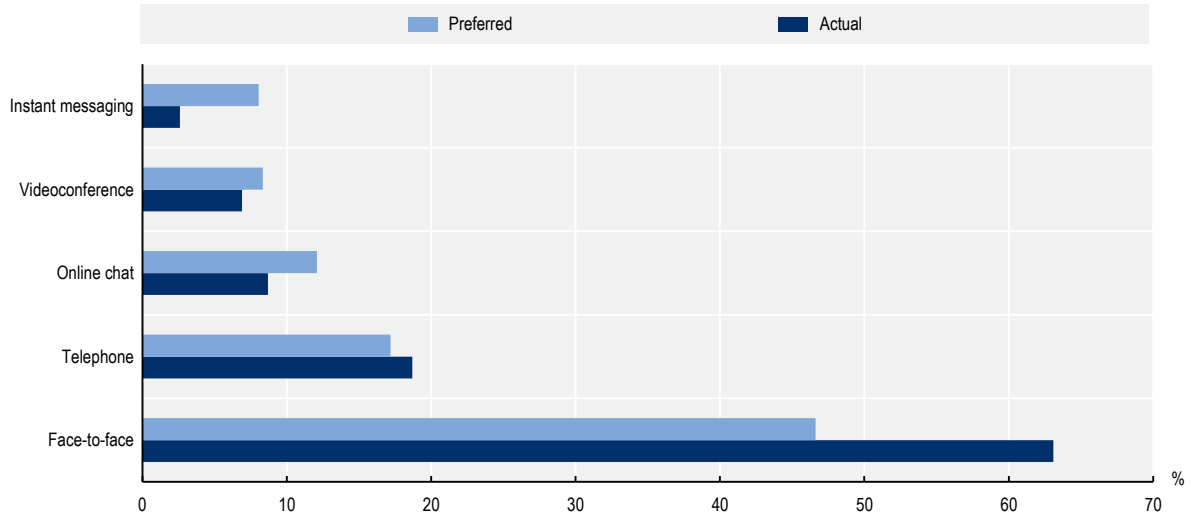
Career guidance services can be delivered in different ways, including face-to-face (e.g. individual or group counselling), by telephone, through online chat, instant messaging, videoconference, or a blended approach. All these approaches allow for a direct interaction with a career guidance advisor.

Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses. Face-to-face services allow for a personalised service with a "human touch", and do not require an internet or a telephone connection. Empirical evidence suggests that measured outcomes are strongest with face-to-face counselling relative to remote alternatives (Box 2.3). On the other hand, adults living in remote areas, or where services are scant may not have access to face-to-face services. Telephone, videoconference, online chat, and instant messaging help overcome distance barriers, and reduce the public cost of programmes. However, they might be harder to use for those with low digital skills, or those who do not have a telephone or internet connection.

Figure 2.4 shows the actual and preferred channels of delivery of career guidance services across the six OECD countries analysed in the SCGA. Of those adults who spoke to a career guidance over the past five years, most (63% of adults) received services face-to-face; 19% received the service by telephone; 9% through online chat; 7% via videoconference; and only 3% received career guidance via instant message.[10] There is a mismatch between adults' preferences about service delivery and how the services are actually delivered. Interestingly, adults seem to want less face-to-face and telephone interactions and more online chat, videoconference, and instant messaging.

Figure 2.4. Actual and preferred channels of service delivery

Percentage of adults who have spoken to a career guidance advisor over the past five years (Actual), and percentage of respondents (Preferred), by channel of delivery



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor. 'Actual' refers to the percentage of people who spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past five years. 'Preferred' refers to the percentage of all respondents, including both users and non-users of career guidance services.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Box 2.3. How does remote delivery of career guidance compare with face-to-face delivery?

Empirical evidence suggests that face-to-face delivery of career guidance may lead to better employment outcomes than remote alternatives. A study of a 2013 public employment service reform in Finland measured the aggregate effect of office closures in 60 municipalities, where face-to-face services were replaced by online and telephone counselling. The analysis suggests that the reform did not impact unemployment rates; however, it increased the average duration of unemployment by 2-3 weeks (Vehkasalo, 2020[23]).

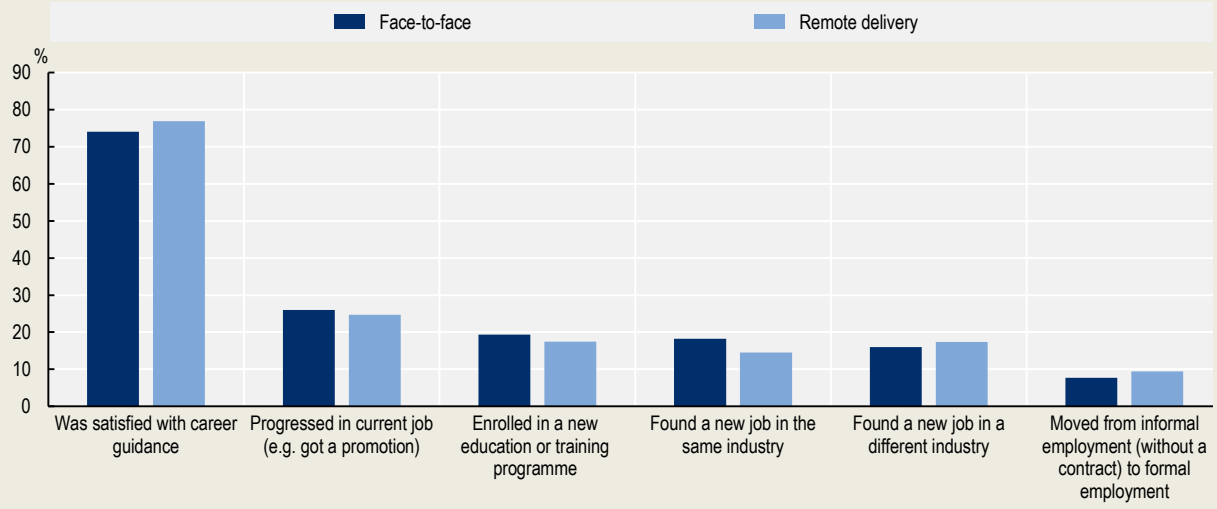
Adults who use digital services (e.g. online platforms) independently seem to have worse outcomes than those who receive personal support from a career guidance advisor. While more expensive and time-consuming than digital services, in-person counselling has larger effects per session (Brown, 2006[24]; Whiston, Brecheisen and Stephens, 2003[25]). However, when adults receive some degree of personal support (even via classes or structured group workshops) in addition to using the digital services, they achieve similar outcomes as those who receive individual face-to-face counselling, but at a reduced cost (Brown, 2006[24]; Whiston, Brecheisen and Stephens, 2003[25]).

While reported satisfaction is higher with remote alternatives according to the SCGA, face-to-face delivery is associated with slightly higher education and labour market outcomes (Figure 2.5). Reported satisfaction tends to be slightly higher with remote delivery than with face-to-face services, perhaps owing to the greater convenience afforded with remote delivery. However, face-to-face delivery is associated with a 2 percentage point higher likelihood of enrolling in a new education or training programme and a 3 percentage point higher likelihood of finding a new job in the same industry. When

controlling for individual, job and firm characteristics in a regression analysis, face-to-face delivery is found to increase the likelihood of positive labour market outcomes by 4% (Chapter 3).

Figure 2.5. User satisfaction and education and labour market outcomes, by mode of delivery

Percentage of adults who received career guidance services in the last five years, by mode of delivery



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor. Remote delivery includes telephone, online chat, videoconference, instant messaging or email.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

2.3. How are career guidance services advertised?

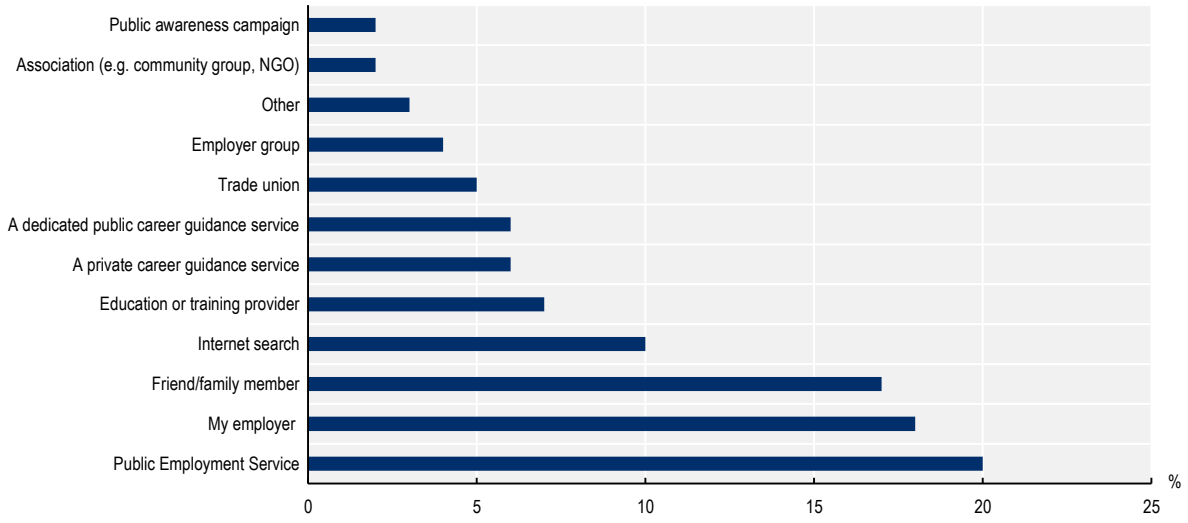
In order to promote high take-up, adults need to be made aware of available career guidance providers and the services they offer. This is a key challenge, because – as highlighted in Chapter 1 – many adults do not use career guidance simply because they are not aware that these services exist or because they feel that they do not need career guidance support.

The extent to which career guidance services are used by adults partly depends on how effectively existing programmes are advertised and promoted. Different actors can play a role in advertising career guidance services, either by pointing to their own services (if they are providers) or by referring to other relevant providers.

To the question ‘Who informed you about the career guidance service you used?’, one in five adults (20%) in the SCGA reported that the information was provided by the PES. Another 18% received the information from their employer, and an additional 17% from a friend or a family member. About 10% of adults found the information independently through internet searches. Other actors played a less important role – each informing only between 2% and 7% of adults (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Advertisement of career guidance services for adults

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by institution who notified them about the service



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

One common approach to advertise career guidance services more broadly is to establish a register or catalogue of career guidance providers. This is particularly important in countries where multiple providers operate. A comprehensive register or catalogue can help adults have an overview of the different providers/counsellors available, where they are located, and how to reach them. Several OECD countries have opted for this approach:

- In the **Czech Republic**, the online platform JOBHUB includes a catalogue of career counsellors and coaches where users can choose a counsellor directly based on their specialisation, their location, the means of communication (in person, video call), whether they have a counselling license, how much the counselling costs and other criteria.
- In **France**, users can find their professional development advisor on the website "*Mon conseil en évolution professionnelle, Mon CEP*". Depending on their personal situation (e.g. employment status, age, disability) the website forwards the user to the specialised CEP organisation in charge. On the websites of these organisations, users find information on the means of communication (individual or group counselling; online or in-person), the costs and other useful information.
- In **Germany**, in the Northern Rhine Westfalia region, the Guidance for Career Development Programme (*Beratung zur beruflichen Entwicklung*, BBE) offers a map indicating the 150 career guidance providers offering services all over the region. Guidance providers include mainly adult education centres, but also NGOs and chambers.
- In **Greece**, the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP), operating under the supervision of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, offers a register of private career guidance providers. The register has the dual purpose of informing the public about available programmes and promoting quality among private career guidance providers. Career guidance providers included in this catalogue receive preferential support by the Ministry of Labour, when applying for European programmes as providers of career guidance services.

- In **Italy**, ISFOL (now INAPP) has developed a database 'National Archive of Guidance' (*Archivio Nazionale Orientamento*) which includes contact details on information and orientation centres (*centri di informazione e orientamento al lavoro*).
- In **Japan**, a portal site to search qualified career consultants – *Cari-con Search* – is available for those who wish to independently look for a career consultant (OECD, 2021[9]).

Another way to raise awareness about the availability of career guidance programmes is through advertising campaigns. In **Flanders** (Belgium), career guidance strategies and measures are supported by relatively large media campaigns on classic media and online/social media. The latest example is the 2020 '*En alles beweegt'* ('And everything is moving') campaign.

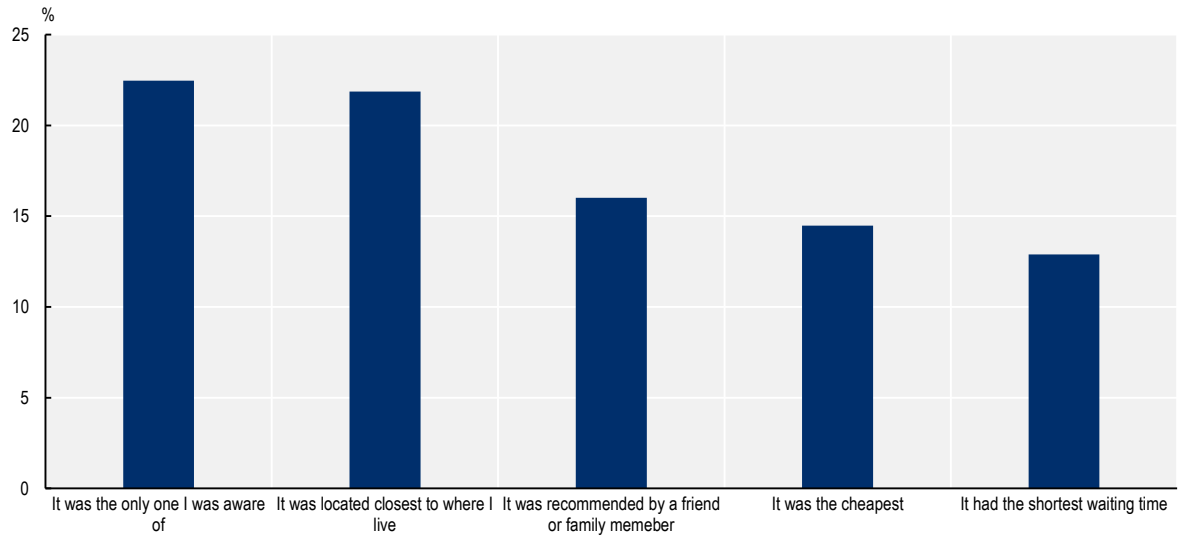
2.4. Why do adults choose one provider over another?

The SCGA investigates the reasons why users chose a particular career guidance provider over others. This provides useful information on what adults value in career guidance, and hence how take-up could be increased. Figure 2.7 shows that when it comes to choosing between different career guidance providers, many adults actually have no choice. To the question 'What made you choose this career guidance service over other ones?', 23% of adults said that they were required to go to this one and 22% said that this was the only provider they were aware of.

When adults do have a choice, different factors play a role in the selection of provider. For example, 22% of adults said that they chose a given provider because it was close to where they live. Recommendations by friends or family members (16%), low cost (14%), and short waiting time (13%), also seem to play a relatively important role in the decision. This suggests that, to encourage higher take-up, providers need to think about how to make services more accessible, affordable, and high-quality.

Figure 2.7. Reasons for choosing a career guidance service

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by reason of choosing a career guidance service over others



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

2.5. Online career guidance portals

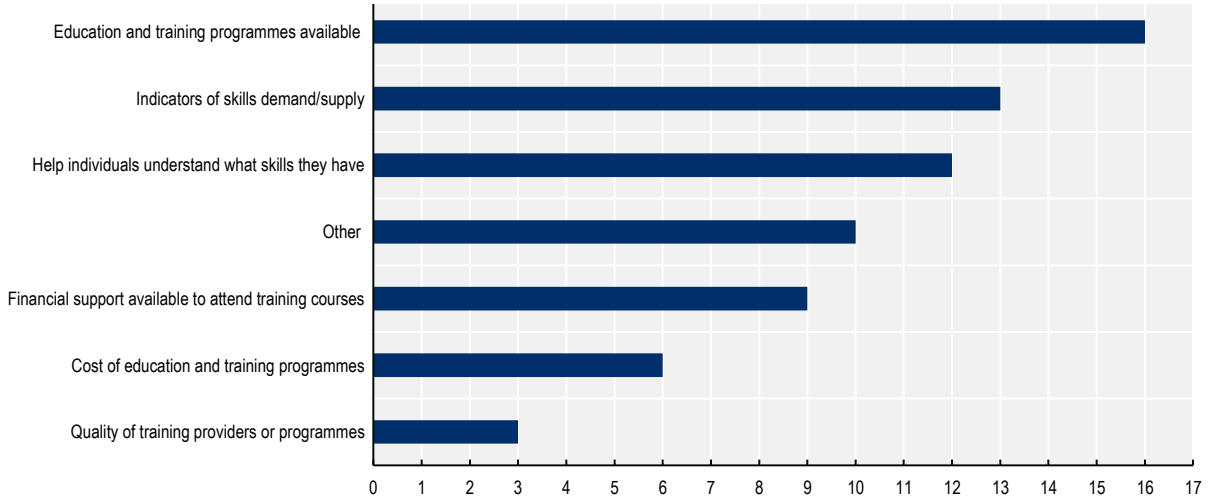
An online career guidance portal is a web-based source of centralised information on jobs and/or training opportunities in one's region or country. It may offer personalised recommendations based on user inputs. Online portals may be used by individuals to support self-directed career and training exploration. They can also be useful for trainers, career guidance advisors and other adult learning experts.

Online career guidance platforms offer cost-effective ways to deliver support for career development. Moreover, they offer self-help strategies for receiving career guidance, which are particularly important in countries or regions where face-to-face services are less available, for non-standard workers (e.g. temporary workers, self-employed) who cannot rely on their employer or trade union for advice, and/or for those who cannot pay for private services.

Figure 2.8 shows the information generally included in online portals, as reported by the countries that responded to the OECD policy questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'. Information on education and training programmes is the most common type of information provided in online portals (16 countries), followed by information on indicators of skills demand/supply (13 countries), and tools to support users in understanding what skills they have (12 countries). In a handful of countries (less than 10), online portals provide information on financial support to attend training courses and the cost of education and training programmes. In only three OECD countries that responded to the questionnaire did online portals provide information on the quality of training providers or programmes (e.g. the satisfaction of participants; employment outcomes). Annex E highlights some country examples.

Figure 2.8. Type of information provided in online portals

Number of countries



Note: The chart shows the number of countries that reported that at least one of their online portals offers a given type of information. The countries that responded to this question are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States.
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

While many online portals contain information on education and training programmes and indicators of skills demand/supply, a feature of high-quality online portals is that they integrate this information. In this way, users can identify the occupations or sectors they are most interested in, and in parallel look for the education and training programmes available to acquire the skills needed to work in those occupations or sectors. For example, in **Denmark**, the *UddannelsesGuiden* (www.ug.dk) has a Job Compass tool

(*JobKompasset*) that provides information about different occupations (e.g. daily activities, average incomes, outlook for the future), as well as the vocational courses that would prepare and certify individuals to work in these occupations.

Another feature that distinguishes high-quality online portals is having information on the quality of education and training providers. This can help users to choose among different options, which is particularly useful when multiple training providers – universities, private training providers – offer similar courses (OECD, 2019[26]). For example, in **Korea**, the HRD net portal offers information on training providers as well as training quality. Quality indicators include completion rates and satisfaction of participants. Similarly, in **Spain**, the online platform for career guidance of the *Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal* (SEPE) (www.sepe.es) provides information on training providers or programmes and their quality (e.g. satisfaction rates, employment rates after graduation).

Users also need to know how much a certain education and training programme costs. Information about financial incentives (e.g. subsidies, tax exemptions, scholarships) to reduce the cost of training is also helpful. For example, in **New Zealand**, the mobile app 'Occupation Outlook' provides information on education institutions (e.g. universities, training providers) and their average cost of study. In **France**, the "*Orientation Pour Tous*" portal includes information on training programmes as well as financial support available to attend training courses.

High-quality online portals also offer skills assessment tools that allow users to identify their abilities, skills needs, and job preferences. For instance, in **Portugal**, the Vi@s portal provides exploratory activities to strengthen users' self-management skills, such as questionnaires, self-assessment and reflection exercises. In **Slovenia**, users can assess their skills through e-Counselling (https://esvetovanje.ess.gov.si/). **Australia**'s Job Outlook has a Skills Transferability tool which identifies a user's skill profile based on their previous experience, education and lifestyle, and then identifies occupations with matching skill requirements. It also informs users about the gap between the skills they have and those required to perform a given occupation (OECD, 2018[21]).

Some online portals provide ways to communicate digitally in real time with a career guidance advisor. This feature allows users to ask questions, express doubts, and receive assistance interpreting labour market information. Online portals with this feature exist in several OECD countries:

- In **Estonia**, *Rajaleidja.ee* – Estonia's largest career portal – has a chat service that enables people to chat online with a career guidance practitioner. No login or identification is needed, although the user can provide their e-mail address to continue the conversation at a later date.
- In **Denmark**, eGuidance (*eVejledning*) provides individual and personal guidance to all citizens via various virtual communication channels: chat, telephone, text message, e-mail, webinars, and Facebook.
- In **Finland**, the online guidance service (https://ohjaustaverkossa.fi/) allows users to ask anonymous questions to guidance professionals and hence create a space for confidential dialogue.
- In **Slovenia**, e-Counselling (https://esvetovanje.ess.gov.si/) provides online career guidance to employed and unemployed individuals. Users can assess their skills, identify interests and training needs, prepare cover letters and CV, and learn more about career management skills and labour market information.
- **Norway** has recently developed a national digital career guidance service that gives all citizens access to online career guidance via chat or telephone. The service also consists of a website with quality assured information and self-help resources. The service is commissioned by the Ministry of Education and developed by Skills Norway.

While they provide useful information in a cost-effective way, online portals also face limitations. One issue is access. Some adults may suffer from digital exclusion: they may not have access to the internet; may

have poor digital skills; or may encounter difficulties in interpreting the volume and complexity of information available online.

Another challenge is the fragmentation of the information provided. Indeed, as shown in Table 2.1, several OECD countries have more than one online portal in place. As a result, information is scattered across different sources and adults may struggle to navigate the multiple platforms. For example, the **Netherlands** has four publicly-funded portals, but there are also many private commercial portals. **Korea** counts four public platforms (HRD-net, Neulbaeum, regional lifelong learning portals, Q-Net) on top of two platforms specifically designed to provide information on e-learning programmes (K-MOOC and Smart Training Education Platform) (OECD, 2020[16]). This fragmentation is symptomatic of a coordination failure, stemming from the fact that career guidance is often delivered by different actors and operates under the aegis of different central and regional authorities.

Table 2.1. Online career guidance portals

Country	Number of portals	Name(s) of the portal(s)
Australia	4	yourcareer.gov.au JobOutlook.gov.au JobJumpStart.gov.au MySkills.gov.au
Austria	1	AMS-Weiterbildungsdatenbank, (www.ams.at/weiterbildungsdatenbank)
Belgium	1	Cité des Metiers (https://www.citedesmetiers.brussels/)
Canada	2	Job Bank (www.jobbank.gc.ca) alis (Alberta) (www.alis.alberta.ca)
Chile	1	https://www.bne.cl/
Czech Republic	3	JOBHUB (www.job-hub.cz) National system of professions (www.nsp.cz) MoLSA portal (www.mpsv.cz)
Denmark	4	Online educational guide (www.ug.dk/) Online educational guide focusing on Adult Training and Education (www.voksenuddannelse.dk/) My Real Skills (www.euv25.dk) My Competence Folder (www.minkompetencemappe.dk/)
Estonia	1	Minukarjaar (www.minukarjäär.ee)
France	1	Mon conseil en évolution professionnelle (https://mon-cep.org/)
Greece	1	EOPPEP Internet Portal for Adults (http://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/)
Ireland	1	Careersportal (https://careersportal.ie/)
Italy	1	MyANPAL (https://myanpal.anpal.gov.it/myanpal/)
Japan	4	Job card site Hello Work Internet Service Hello Work Plus Japanese O-NET
Korea	2	hrd-net (www.hrd.go.kr) Work-net (www.work.go.kr)
Lithuania	1	AIKOS.LT (https://www.aikos.smm.lt/en/Pages/About-AIKOS.aspx)
Netherlands	4	UWV portal (PES) (https://www.uwv.nl/particulieren/index.aspx) Leren en werken (https://www.lerenenwerken.nl/aan-de-slag-met-je-loopbaan) Studiekeuze 123 (https://www.studiekeuze123.nl/) KiesMBO (https://www.kiesmbo.nl/)
Poland	1	Talent Development Center (Centrum Rozwoju Talentów) (https://centrumtalentow.pl/)
Portugal	3	Qualifica (https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/) Passaporte Qualifica (https://www.passaportequalifica.gov.pt/) Vi@s (https://vias.iefp.pt)

Country	Number of portals	Name(s) of the portal(s)
Slovenia	5	http://english.ess.gov.si www.mojaizbira.si https://esvetovanje.ess.gov.si www.poiscidelo.si www.ess.gov.si/ncips/kam-in-kako
Spain	1	www.sepe.es
Sweden	2	Arbetsförmedlingen (https://arbetsformedlingen.se/) Skolverket www.skolverket.se
United States	4	CareerOne Stop ONET MyNextMove.org Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ooh)

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

Despite many countries having multiple online portals, geographic coverage is often an issue. In **Poland**, the Talent Development Center (*Centrum Rozwoju Talentów*) (https://centrumtalentow.pl/) is a regional website used by the local labour office in the city of Gdansk. No other portals appear to be available in the country. In **Germany**, some federal states run their own online platforms – which provide information on different kinds of online learning, available financial incentives, a course finder and a finder for in-person guidance offices (OECD, forthcoming[4]). This translates into fragmented services across the country and differences in quality across portals.

A final challenge relates to the quality of information provided in online platforms. As online platforms proliferate on the internet, users must be ready to assess the quality and sources of labour market information. Chapter 3 discusses steps taken by some countries to quality-assure the information available online.

2.6. How have career guidance providers adapted their service delivery in the context of the COVID-19 crisis?

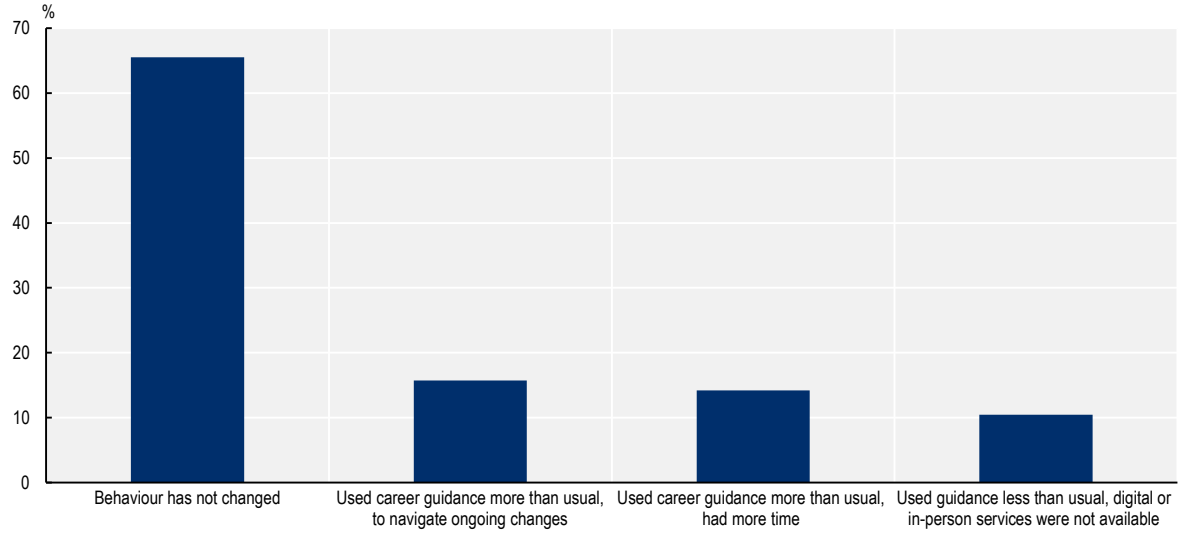
Since early 2020, countries around the world have been responding to a global health pandemic, COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on people's working lives, employment status, and economic prospects.

During the pandemic, many countries put in place policy measures to limit the spread of the virus. These included teleworking, home confinement, and reduction of working hours. It became more important than ever for people of all ages to have easy access to information and support about finding jobs or how to upskill or retrain.

The results of the SCGA survey suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in the use of career guidance among adults (Figure 2.9). About 24% of respondents used career guidance more than usual, either to navigate ongoing changes (e.g. due to job loss or fear of job loss), or because they had more time. A minority (10%) said that they used services less than usual, because career guidance was not available in person or digitally. The rest of respondents (66%) said that they did not adjust their behaviour. The net effect of these changes is an overall increase in the share of adults who use career guidance: from 31% on an annual basis prior to the pandemic, up to 38% during the pandemic. An international survey of career guidance practitioners, policy officials and programme administrators similarly found that demand for career guidance services increased during the first stages of the pandemic (Cedefop et al., 2020[27]).

Figure 2.9. Change in the use of career guidance services during COVID-19

Percentage of adults responding whether behaviour regarding career guidance has changed in the context of the COVID-19 crisis



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected how career guidance services are implemented and delivered. Table 2.2 shows that virtually all OECD countries that responded to the OECD 2020 policy questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults', made or planned changes to career guidance services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most common change was the temporary suspension or significant reduction of all face-to-face counselling services. Counselling services offered in groups (e.g. through workshops) were also suspended until further notice. In some cases, this led to a temporary closure of career guidance services. For example, Hungary's national guidance services were designed for in-person, face-to-face meetings. During the COVID-19 crisis, services closed and the national infrastructure is not yet set up to move to e-guidance services (CEDEFOP, 2020[28]).

For the most part, however, OECD countries took steps to maintain services during the crisis and to support the continuity of guidance and information delivery using technology or via the internet. This was confirmed by the international survey of career guidance practitioners, which found that although career guidance services were partially or completely disrupted, most countries maintained some level of operation during the first phase of the pandemic (Cedefop et al., 2020[27]). Career guidance providers in countries like Belgium, Estonia, France, Greece, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Spain put in place or strengthened pre-existing remote services, i.e. online, telephone, text messages, and/or using other innovative tools. For example:

- In **Estonia**, the public employment service made career guidance services available remotely (telephone, e-mail, Skype) throughout the crisis, and also started using Microsoft Teams as a means to provide career counselling and workshops.
- In **France**, the continuity of the CEP (*Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle*) was ensured by allowing all counsellors to telework. To make this happen, counsellors were provided with a

professional computer and mobile phone. Nearly 90% of individuals who were in follow-up continued to receive support during the crisis (CEDEFOP, 2020[29]).

- In **Sweden**, the PES (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) recently relaunched a digital self-service package for career guidance, which includes digital career guidance services that can be used by those who are unsure about which profession to choose, those who want to have more information on the current labour market situation and those who want to start studying or want to change job.

Some OECD countries provided support to assist career guidance advisors during the crisis in adapting services to remote delivery. **Ireland** provided guidance counsellors with training to share good practices on delivery of guidance online during COVID-19 (Department of Education and Skills, 2020[30]). Similarly, in **Portugal**, the ANQEP made available a set of guidelines to enable the *Qualifica Centres* to carry out their activities at a distance.

In a similar vein, career guidance providers in some countries shared good practices with one another. In **Finland**, career guidance advisors shared materials and experiences with providing career guidance from a distance using their own social media channels (CEDEFOP, 2020[31]). Similarly, in **Ireland**, the National Center for Guidance in Education (NCGE) coordinated and delivered a series of webinars to help career guidance providers to continue offering services remotely during the crisis.

Table 2.2. Changes to career guidance services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Country	Changes made or planned	Description of change
Austria	Yes	• Currently there are no face-to-face counselling or other face-to-face services, especially no workshops with groups of people
Belgium	Yes	• Virtual services have been put in place to inform and advise individuals, such as online information, email box, Facebook chat, Call Center
Chile	Yes	• An intersectoral effort was made that will allow continuing with the work of the *Programa de Intermediación Laboral* through digital platforms
Czech Republic	Yes	• Personal counselling has been reduced, but telephone and online counselling has been strengthened
Denmark	No	• /
Estonia	Yes	• Career services made available online (telephone, e-mail, Skype) throughout the crisis. • Microsoft Teams were added as a means to provide career counselling and workshops during the crisis.
France	Yes	• Remote service has been implemented to ensure continuity of services
Greece	Planned	• Provided distance career guidance services
Ireland	Yes	• Phone calls, text messages and "postcards" have been distributed to those who do not have access to broadband. • No face-to face guidance provision was permitted. • Supports provided to all guidance services, including a "Support Information for Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Practitioners in Further Education and Training (FET)" to provide guidelines on good practice on delivery of guidance online during COVID-19.
Italy	Yes	• The conditionality mechanisms have been suspended for access to the Citizenship Income and, more generally, to Naspi (Monthly Unemployment Benefits). • The EG (Euroguidance) Team is working remotely to deliver a revised service provision that has shifted significantly towards web-based solutions (webinars, e-learning, etc.).
Japan	Yes	• PES provides telephone or online career guidance service for reducing the risk of pandemic.
Korea	Yes	• Expansion of non-face-to-face services • Reinforcement of recruitment infrastructure for private agencies • Expansion of advertisements • Allowing non-face-to-face services (real-time online programs, etc.)
Lithuania	Yes	• More online consultations are available.
Mexico	Not yet	• /

Country	Changes made or planned	Description of change
Poland	Yes	• The Talent Development Center (Centrum Rozwoju Talentów) activities are suspended until further notice. In important cases telephone contact is possible.
Portugal	Yes	• Since March 2020, ANQEP made available a set of guidelines to enable the Qualifica Centres to develop their activity on a distance basis, namely by e-learning.
Spain	Yes	• Regional PES are planning new actions in order to provide better career guidance services. • Digital instruments for career guidance are being reinforced.
Sweden	Yes	• Private providers are now temporarily offering services online or by phone.
Turkey	Yes	• Counselling services (Job Club, job search skills, occupation promotion days etc.), which were offered in groups, were suspended until further notice.

Note: Information was collected between March and July 2020.
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

During the crisis online portals became all the more important (Table 2.3). Most OECD countries who replied to the policy questionnaire made or planned changes to online career guidance portals during the COVID-19 pandemic. They became a popular destination for users to find information related to work during COVID-19. Some online portals added an additional section specifically related to COVID-19. This helped promote key industrial sectors of essential services that had insufficient number of workers, provided information about current labour market changes, government support during the pandemic, and short study options to prepare individuals to re-enter the workforce after the crisis. For example, in **Canada**, a COVID-19 resource page was launched in mid-April on the Job Bank website. Similarly, in the **United States**, the CareerOneStop portal provided information for filing for unemployment and other benefits available to workers who lost their job during the crisis.

Some online portals provided the visitor with the opportunity to receive remote counselling services during the crisis. In **Greece**, for instance, the EOPPEP Internet Portal for Adults allowed visitors to have real time conversations with a career guidance advisor. As another example, a chatbot was launched on the **Czech Republic** MoLSA portal, which answered visitors' key questions. In **Estonia**, a special subsection describing available online career services was added to the online portal (www.minukarjäär.ee).

While most countries successfully adapted their services during the pandemic, the shift to remote delivery may have reduced access for some vulnerable groups. Results from the international survey on career guidance suggest that low-qualified and low-skilled workers, as well as the self-employed were reportedly more affected by the reduced supply of in-person career guidance services during the pandemic (Cedefop et al., 2020[27]).

Table 2.3. Changes to online career guidance portals during the COVID-19 pandemic

Country	Changes made or planned	Description of change
Australia	Yes	• Strong focus on connecting people with information about current labour market changes, government support during the pandemic and study options such as short courses that will equip individuals to re-enter the workforce as soon as possible.
Austria	No	/
Belgium	Yes	• More online services
Canada	Yes	• A COVID-19 resource page was launched in mid-April, on the Job Bank website (www.jobbank.gc.ca). It has become a popular destination for users to find information related to work during COVID-19.
Czech Republic	Yes	• A chatbot has been launched on the MoLSA portal, which helps visitors answer basic questions.
Denmark	Yes	• National response to strengthen career guidance for adults being unemployed due to COVID-19.
Estonia	Yes	• Special subsection describing online career services was added to the online portal

Country	Changes made or planned	Description of change
France	Yes	• Any change affecting the rights and/or the way in which they can be exercised will be indicated on the portal '*Mon conseil en évolution professionnelle*'.
Greece	Yes	• The EOPPEP Internet Portal for Adults will provide to the visitor the opportunity for receiving distant counselling services, to have a real time direct conversation with a career guidance counsellor through a special form that will be filled by the visitor.
Ireland	Yes	• Careersportal provided links to various national agencies and guidelines.
Korea	Yes	• Process to strengthen mobile access is underway.
Lithuania	No	/
Portugal	No	/
Spain	Yes	• The portal 'www.sepe.es' reinforced its virtual tools for career guidance.
Sweden	Yes	• No specific career guidance services were developed specifically to meet the COVID-19 situation, but the intensification and prioritization of digital career guidance are increasing.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

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Notes

[1] Important differences exist across the six countries studied. For instance, the PES is the main career guidance provider in France and Germany; in Chile, Italy, New Zealand, private career guidance providers play the most important role; while in the United States employers or employers' groups are the most frequently used provider of career guidance services. Dedicated public career guidance agencies play a relatively important role in all countries, where 10% or more of adults have consulted such a service – with the exception of Germany (5%). Education and training institutions play an important role in Chile, Germany, New Zealand and the United States, but a minor role in France and Italy. Employers or employers' groups play a more important role than trade unions in all countries analysed.

[2] The use of profiling in recent years has increased in OECD countries due to a variety of reasons, including budgetary pressures, increased inflows of jobseekers following the global financial crisis, and a greater diversity of client groups.

[3] In contrast, jobseekers with a high score are only expected to agree on a Personal Progression Plan after six months. All jobseekers, regardless of profiling score are called in for a group information session within the first three weeks of their claim. Newly registered jobseekers under 25 years receive the most intensive engagement (i.e. every month), regardless of their PEX score.

[4] The counselling service allows to establish whether the worker is eligible for the programme, as well as what kind of measures and what fields of study are most suitable.

[5] On top of career guidance provided to workers, employers are also well placed to provide career guidance to students thinking about their future careers (Musset and Kurekova, 2018[32]). Career guidance for students fall outside the scope of this report.

[6] For most other employees, the only formal process for discussing their career development is likely to be the performance appraisal process. The reality for most employees is that they either have to rely on career support from their line managers, delivered formally through an appraisal process, or on informal support processes.

[7] This is in contrast with evidence presented in Chapter 1, according to which workers in SMEs use career guidance services more often than workers in larger firms. This may be due to the fact that SME workers are more proactive in looking for career guidance outside the company, and/or that services offered by larger firms target only certain groups of workers (e.g. high performers) or are poorly used.

[8] In most cases, support activities are initiated by some form of counselling, guidance meetings, or advisory seminars, in order to determine the characteristics of and possibilities for the person. These initial activities are usually followed by further measures in the form of training or education, personal development activities, study or support in starting a new business.

[9] https://www.voksenuddannelse.dk/.

[10] There are only minor variations across countries (results not shown).

3 Quality and impact

What sets high-quality career guidance apart? After reviewing survey evidence on users' satisfaction and outcomes, this chapter discusses policy measures that countries have put in place to improve quality. Measures include: certifying organisations against quality standards; defining staff qualifications and competencies; measuring outcomes; producing and using high-quality labour market information; and developing tools to promote tailored career guidance services.

In Brief

Governments can support quality career guidance for adults

Career guidance for adults has the potential to improve employment, education and training outcomes, while mitigating skills shortages and smoothing the business cycle. To achieve these desired outcomes, services must be of high quality. High-quality career guidance is personalised, based on current labour market information, and delivered by well-qualified advisors. Governments can support quality service delivery by defining quality standards and encouraging the monitoring of outcomes. The findings of this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- Three-quarters (75%) of adults who received career guidance reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the guidance they received. Most adults (70%) experienced an improvement to their employment, education or training status within six months of receiving guidance. However, only 22% said that guidance was useful in achieving that outcome.
- Receiving a personalised career development roadmap is associated with a 25% higher likelihood of improved employment prospects within six months of receiving career guidance. It is also positively associated with enrolling in education and training. Face-to-face provision of career guidance makes a positive difference to employment outcomes. There is also some evidence that the type of provider influences outcomes, underscoring the importance of professionalised services: provision by employers or employer associations are found to be linked to a positive employment outcome and provision by education and training providers is positively associated with education outcomes.
- Quality standards were used in 7 out of 21 career guidance programmes reported in the OECD policy questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'. In some cases, providers must meet prescribed quality standards in order to receive public funds. Voluntary standards also exist, and are a useful tool for motivating quality improvements and attracting users.
- While the job of a 'career guidance advisor' is not a regulated profession in most countries, employers generally require minimum training and qualifications for employment. Requirements vary by context, but a tertiary degree is usually required. Advisors working in public employment services have lower qualification requirements, but are often required to complete in-service training. A growing number of countries use competency frameworks to design training and qualifications.
- Monitoring outcomes of career guidance holds providers accountable. Providers can conduct self-evaluations or have external bodies conduct evaluations. Typical outcomes measured are economic (e.g. employment, wages) and social/psychological (e.g. job satisfaction, user satisfaction, overall well-being).
- High quality labour market information is objective, up to date, fit for purpose and sufficiently granular. Adults have different information needs from young people. For instance, they require advice on flexible career pathways that specify how to transition from one occupation to another while focusing training efficiently on their skill gaps.
- Tailored career guidance starts with a thorough assessment of an adult's skills. Skills profiling tools are still uncommon across OECD countries, while interviews and self-assessment tools are more common. Half of all surveyed adults report receiving a personalised career development roadmap as an output of guidance.

Introduction

Career guidance for adults has the potential to improve employment, education and training outcomes. For the economy as a whole, it can mitigate skills shortages, smooth the business cycle by facilitating structural adjustment, and boost productivity by connecting adults with education and training opportunities. To have these desired positive outcomes, however, services must be of high quality.

Assessing and assuring the quality of career guidance services is made challenging by the variable nature of service delivery, which is ideally adapted to different contexts and to different user's needs. As outlined in Chapter 2, the provision of career guidance spans multiple settings. Adults needing guidance do not fit one mould: they may be unemployed; employed but at risk of displacement; employed but looking for a career change; or returning to work after years out of the labour force. Each of these users has different guidance needs, requiring different resources and tools. The variable nature of career guidance services poses challenges for defining what constitutes high-quality service.

This chapter first presents survey evidence of the perceived impact of career guidance services, focusing on adults' overall satisfaction with the services they received and their employment and training outcomes. The chapter then discusses policy measures that countries could put in place to improve quality provision. It elaborates three components of high-quality provision: producing and using high-quality labour market information, tailoring career guidance to individual needs, and standardising the training and qualifications of career guidance advisors. It then looks at two ways to ensure quality: certifying providers against quality standards, and monitoring outcomes.

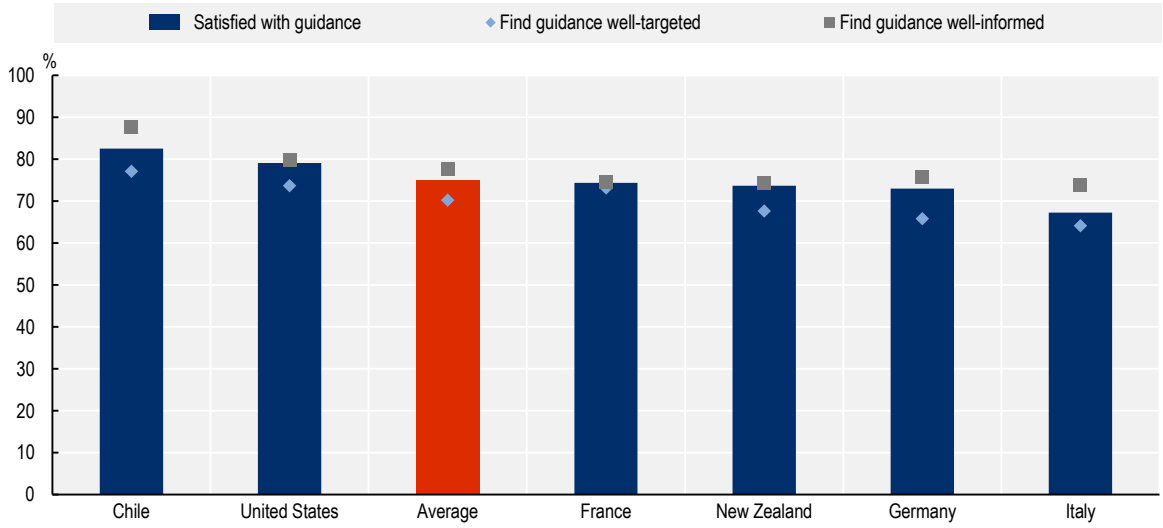
3.1. How satisfied are adults with career guidance services?

The OECD Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA) provides insights into the perceived impact of career guidance services. Across the countries surveyed, overall satisfaction with career guidance was high, with 75% of adults who had received career guidance services in the last five years reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the guidance they received (Figure 3.1). General satisfaction was highest in Chile (83%) and the United States (79%) and lowest in Italy (67%). Satisfaction levels tend to be higher the more users report that guidance was well informed by labour market information and tailored to their needs (Figure 3.1).

Overall satisfaction with career guidance varies by provider. While the public employment service (PES) tends to be the largest provider of adult career guidance, dissatisfaction with its services is high (Chapter 2). Dissatisfaction with counselling offered by the PES could point to a failure to meet the more specialised needs of employed adults who seek guidance to progress in their current job or to change jobs. Improving the quality of services for employed adults means better tailoring services to their needs, by adapting the training and qualification requirements of staff, providing more relevant labour market information, and using appropriate tools to assess their skills and to define personalised career and training pathways. These policy approaches are discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 3.1. User satisfaction with guidance, and perception of guidance as well-informed and well-targeted

Percentage of adults who spoke with a career guidance advisor over the past five years



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

3.2. What are the outcomes of guidance?

Box 3.1 summarises the evaluation evidence on the impact of career guidance on three types of outcomes: learning and skills, participation in training, and employment. The literature suggests that career guidance is highly effective at improving learning and skills and training participation among adults. It is also effective at helping unemployed workers to find jobs, though evidence is less robust as to its impact on career progression and job satisfaction.

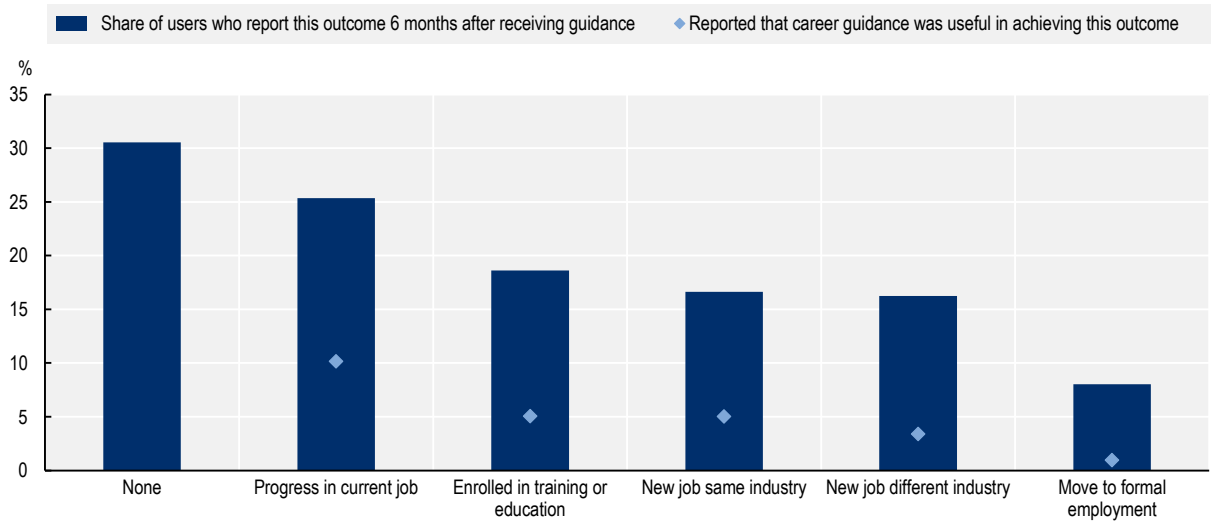
According to the SCGA, the majority (70%) of users report some change to their employment or training status in the six months after receiving career guidance (Figure 3.2). A quarter (25%) of users made progress in their job (e.g. obtained a promotion), while 19% enrolled in an education or training programme. The next most common change was moving to a new job in the same industry (17%), followed by moving to a new job in a different industry (16%). In Italy and Germany, users were least likely to report any change to their employment and training status. Adults in Chile were more likely to report making progress in their job or enrolling in an education or training programme. Adults in the United States were more likely to move to a different job in either the same industry or a different one.

Table 3.1 summarises results from a regression of the likelihood of achieving employment or training outcomes after receiving career guidance, while controlling for a set of individual, job and firm characteristics. Two factors stand out as being highly associated with positive employment outcomes: receiving a personalised career development roadmap (increases the likelihood by 25%), and using services delivered by an employer or employer group (both increase the likelihood by 10%, relative to services delivered by the PES). Having face-to-face interaction with a career guidance advisor is also associated with a higher likelihood of achieving positive employment outcomes (4% higher than remote alternatives). When it comes to education and training participation, an adult is most likely to enrol in a programme after receiving career guidance from an education or training provider (17% higher than when

provided by the PES), followed by an employer group (12% higher), or a dedicated public career guidance service (8%). Receiving a personalised career development roadmap also raises the likelihood of enrolling in an education or training programme by 7%.

Figure 3.2. Employment, education and training outcomes of career guidance

Percentage of adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor in the past five years, by reported outcome



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor. Respondents were asked whether any of these outcomes occurred within six months of receiving career guidance.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

While most users reported a change to their employment and training status, few attributed the change to having received career guidance services. Only 22% of users say that career guidance was useful in achieving that outcome (Figure 3.2). Perhaps adults do not fully appreciate the impact of career guidance, given the conflating influence of other factors, including family and friends. Adults who seek out career guidance may have particular characteristics, like strong motivation, that make them more likely to network, apply for jobs and enrol in training. Relative to their own efforts, users may not view their meeting with a career guidance advisor as having an important impact on their employment and training outcomes. Self-perceptions of impact are subjective in nature. Without a counterfactual of what might have happened had users not received career guidance, it is impossible to attribute outcomes reliably.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that adults value career guidance services beyond their capacity to bring about employment and training outcomes. High satisfaction levels despite an absence of perceived employment and training outcomes provide evidence for this. Users may value the psychological benefits of career guidance, such as higher self-esteem, sense of well-being, self-confidence or insight, awareness of opportunities, and future direction (Kidd, Jackson and Hirsh, 2003[1]). They may also value the proven opportunity to learn new skills, like decision-making and information-seeking skills (Maguire, 2004[2]).

Table 3.1. Employment, education and training outcomes of career guidance

Marginal effects from a probit regression

	Employment outcome		Education and training outcome	
	Respondents who used career guidance in the last 5 years		Respondents who used career guidance in the last 5 years	
Face-to-face delivery (ref=remote delivery)	0.037	*	0.030	
Provider type (ref=PES)				
Private career guidance provider	-0.029		0.060	*
Dedicated public career guidance service	-0.018		0.083	*
My employer	0.103	***	0.009	
Trade union	0.065		0.051	
Employer group	0.095	*	0.119	**
Education or training provider	-0.088	**	0.171	***
Association	-0.158	*	0.101	
Others	-0.240	***	0.037	
Personalised career development roadmap	0.252	***	0.066	***
Observations	2 435		2 435	
Pseudo R^2	0.331		0.068	

Note: The dependent variable "Employment outcome" takes value 1 if a respondent reported at least one of the following outcomes: "Found a new job in the same industry", "Found a new job in a different industry", "Progressed in my current job (e.g. got a promotion)", or "Moved from informal employment (without a contract) to formal employment," and 0 otherwise. The dependent variable "Education outcome" takes value 1 if the respondent reported that they "Enrolled in a new education or training programme "and 0 otherwise. The regression includes additional controls for country, age, place of residence, education, gender, employment status, migration, firm size and contract type. The table reports marginal effects, i.e. percentage change in the outcome variable following a change in the relevant explanatory variable. Marginal effects for categorical variables refer to a discrete change from the base level. *,**,***: statistically significant at the 1%, 0.1%, and 0.01% level, respectively.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Box 3.1. Evidence on the outcomes of career guidance for adults

Learning and skills

Empirical evidence shows that career guidance can have a positive impact on short-term learning outcomes like decision-making skills, information-seeking skills, self-awareness, and job search skills (Killeen and Kidd, 1991[3]; Bimrose, Barnes and Hughes, 2009[4]; Maguire, 2004[2]; Kidd, Jackson and Hirsh, 2003[1]). It can increase confidence and motivation (Bimrose, Barnes and Hughes, 2009[4]), and improve adults' attitudes towards learning (European Commission, 2015[5]).

Training participation

There is evidence that voluntary exposure to guidance increases the likelihood of adults participating in education and training relative to similar adults not exposed to guidance. Several impact evaluations of publicly funded career guidance for adults in the United Kingdom found a significant impact of guidance on participation in education or training (Lane et al., 2017[6]; Killeen and White, 2000[7]). In experiments with Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) in the United States, evaluations showed that take-up of ITAs was highest where counselling was offered on a voluntary basis without being too directive, while worse results were obtained when counselling was mandatory (Gautié and Perez, 2012[8]).

Employment

Evidence on longer-term impacts – like the quantity and quality of employment matches, or career progression – is less robust. The UK impact evaluations mentioned above found no positive impacts on employment, benefit receipt, career progression or job satisfaction. In a meta-analysis of evaluations of active labour market programmes, Card, Kluve and Weber (2015[9]) found that job search assistance (which included guidance as a component) increases the probability of employment in the short-run and is more cost-effective than other active labour market programmes (i.e. training, private sector incentives, public employment). The impact on the long-term probability of employment is small. In another review of the literature, Brown (2006[10]) concluded that interventions designed narrowly to help people find a job (with a focus on imparting job-search and interview skills, but also including a guidance component) are very effective in helping people find jobs, but may not be as successful in ensuring satisfaction in those jobs.

3.3. Policies to promote high-quality career guidance services

Countries can influence the quality of career guidance services in several ways. This section first elaborates three components of high-quality provision: producing and using high-quality labour market information, tailoring career guidance to adults' needs, and standardising the training and qualifications of career guidance advisors. It then looks at two ways to ensure quality: by certifying providers against quality standards, and monitoring outcomes.

3.3.1. Producing and using high-quality labour market information

Providing effective career guidance depends on producing and using high-quality information about the current and future labour market. Career guidance professionals rely on such information to provide clients with accurate advice about their labour market prospects. The availability of high-quality labour market information is also crucial for the many adults who search online to learn about their career, education and training options (e.g. through online portals, see Chapter 2).

Producing high-quality labour market information

Labour market information (LMI) is systematically collected and disseminated in all OECD countries (OECD, 2016[11]), though the type of information and the approaches and tools used to collect and disseminate this information vary. They include surveys of employers, adults or graduates; administrative data; online vacancy data; forecasts or foresight exercises; and sectoral or occupational studies. High-quality labour market information is objective, timely, sufficiently granular, fit for purpose, and well-coordinated (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2. What constitutes high-quality labour market information?

High-quality labour market information (LMI) is:

- **Objective**. LMI should be free of bias, and grounded in research evidence.
- **Timely**. Given how quickly the labour market evolves, LMI should be regularly updated.
- **Sufficiently granular**. Local, regional or sectoral-level data are often more scarce than national-level data due to higher costs associated with achieving sufficient sample sizes. But granular LMI enables advisors to provide tailored advice.
- **Fit for purpose**. To inform quality career guidance for adults, advisors need information about current and future labour market needs, as well as about flexible pathways that facilitate transitions from one occupation to another.
- **Well-coordinated**. Building a national LMI system requires coordination from many different stakeholders. Information about employment and education pathways is most useful when it is integrated.

Source: Summarised from OECD (2016[11]), *Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252073-en.

Adults and young people have different LMI needs. Compared with young people, adults may be more interested in learning about shorter education and training programmes that can be carried out close to home and in flexible formats, e.g. part-time, during evenings, weekends, or in modules. Information on flexible pathways from one occupation to another, based on an analysis of skills gaps, will also be of particular interest to adults.

Advancements in scraping technologies, big and open data, the use of artificial intelligence, and online surveys have enabled diverse players to produce LMI, and this has both advantages and disadvantages. It enables the production of more data at finer levels of granularity (e.g. local, sectoral). It also means that data are updated more quickly. But such data have disadvantages as well, including the underrepresentation of certain groups. For instance, a **UK** study compared occupational demand using scraped online vacancy data versus labour force survey data. Low-skilled occupations were under-represented in the scraped online vacancy data relative to the more traditional labour force survey data (Souto-Otero and Brown, 2016[12]). Another challenge with having so many players producing LMI is quality assurance.

Some countries have taken steps to assure the quality of LMI. The **United Kingdom** set up LMI for All; an online repository of data that collects, vets and standardises existing labour market data. Career development practitioners work with software developers to design online platforms that showcase selected data from LMI for All in a way that suits their clients' needs. Another approach is to set quality standards for LMI and its use. One outcome of the 2003 **Danish** Act on Guidance was generating conditions for tailored and high-quality LMI in guidance. The **Austrian** PES (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) sets central minimum standards for service delivery, including access to up-to-date and gender-sensitive career information. These standards apply nation-wide and each AMS decides autonomously how to implement them.

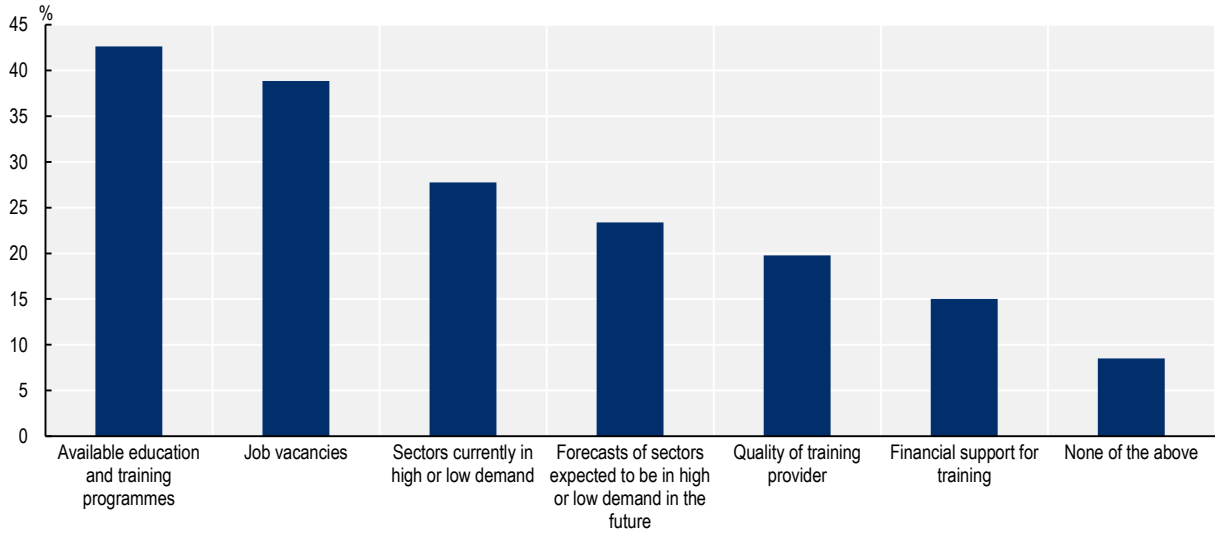
Using labour market information in career guidance

Countries could make better use of LMI in career guidance. Possible uses of LMI in career guidance include training advisors in the most up-to-date LMI available, promoting development of skills in high-demand, and updating online platforms. In the OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career guidance for adults', only 12 out of 21 countries reported that they use LMI information to inform career guidance. Furthermore, while most adults say that career guidance is well informed (Figure 3.1), less than half

received information about education and training opportunities, job vacancies, or sectors currently in high or low demand (Figure 3.3). Adults are even less likely to receive information about sectors forecasted to be in high or low demand in the future, the quality of training providers or about financial support for training.

Figure 3.3. Type of information that adults receive from career guidance advisors

Percentage of adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by type of information received



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Training career guidance advisors in the most up-to-date LMI is one way to make better use of LMI in career guidance. Without support, advisors struggle to locate the information users need, and to interpret it correctly. Canada's Labour Market Information Council conducted a survey of career development practitioners and found that only 60% think that LMI is easy to understand, and less than half (43%) say that they received training to help them access or make sense of the data (LMIC, 2019[13]). Advisors are often expected to keep themselves informed about labour market developments, though training is provided in some countries. In the *Cités des Métiers* centres in **Belgium**, advisors participate in weekly information sessions delivered by a specialist. In **Sweden**, the PES (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) and firm representatives work in close collaboration to offer labour market information training sessions to teachers and career counsellors in schools. The career guidance advisors in charge of **France**'s CEP receive training sessions to stay up to date about government reforms, economic changes, labour market cycles, innovations and digital transformations affecting the labour market. As part of **Mexico**'s Employment Support Programme, advisors are offered training on the behaviour of local and regional labour markets.

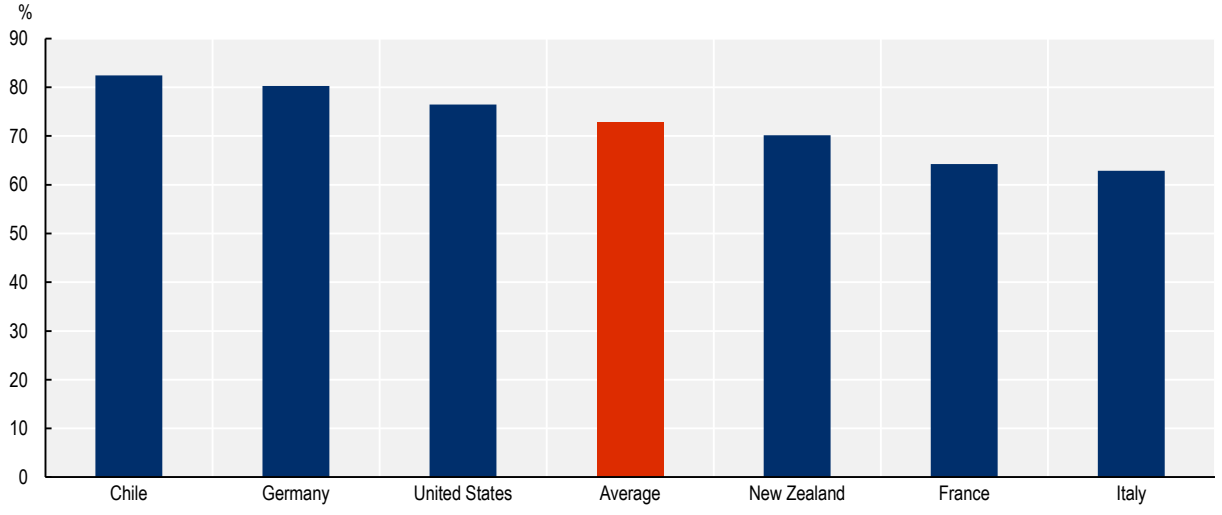
Promoting the development of skills in high demand is another way to make better use of LMI in career guidance. Only 7 out of 21 countries reported promoting the development of skills in high demand as a specific aim of career guidance programmes. In **Belgium**'s *Dispositif d'orientation tout au long de la vie* (OTLAV), guidance advisors promote skills in high demand in both group information sessions and individual guidance interviews. Users of career guidance in Belgium's VDAB (PES) are encouraged towards high-demand occupations based on sectoral development plans, while taking into account their capacity, interest and competences. To benefit from free training, low-skilled adults in **Estonia** must first undertake career

counselling (*Karjäärinõustamine*) and they are encouraged towards training in skills in demand. In **Spain**, guidance for the long-term unemployed supports upskilling and reskilling in strategic sectors.

Finally, updating online portals is another way to make better use of LMI. As noted in Chapter 1, 69% of surveyed adults searched online for employment, education and training information in the last five years. The majority (72%) of adults who looked online for information about employment, education and training opportunities said that they found this information to be user-friendly or very user-friendly (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4. User-friendliness of online information

Percentage of adults who looked online for information on employment, education and training opportunities over the past five years, by those who found information to be user-friendly or very user-friendly



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor. Online information users looked online for information on employment, education or training opportunities online in the last five years.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

3.3.2. Tailoring career guidance services to adults' needs

To be effective, career guidance should be tailored to an adult's particular needs. This requires taking the time to understand the client's objectives and to assess their unique skill set. According to the SCGA, 70% of career guidance users felt that the advice they received was targeted to their specific needs (Figure 3.1). However, only half (51%) confirmed that they received a personalised career development roadmap (Figure 3.6).

Organisational pressures can create disincentives to tailored service. Public employment services often reward counsellors for quickly matching jobseekers with jobs. This approach contributes to less personalised services, by prioritising quick entry into employment over high-quality job matches. A "revolving door" phenomenon can result, whereby adults rotate back and forth between periods of employment in poorly fitting jobs and periods of unemployment. A more personalised approach takes the time to explore and address underlying obstacles to employment and to support the adult in finding work that is a good fit. It may entail first helping them to identify and complete training to address skills gaps.

This section looks at two aspects of tailored career guidance: first, assessing an adults' unique skill set, and then developing a personalised career development roadmap that plots out a sequence of activities

to achieve his or her objectives. It also considers how to tailor the information and advice presented on online career guidance portals.

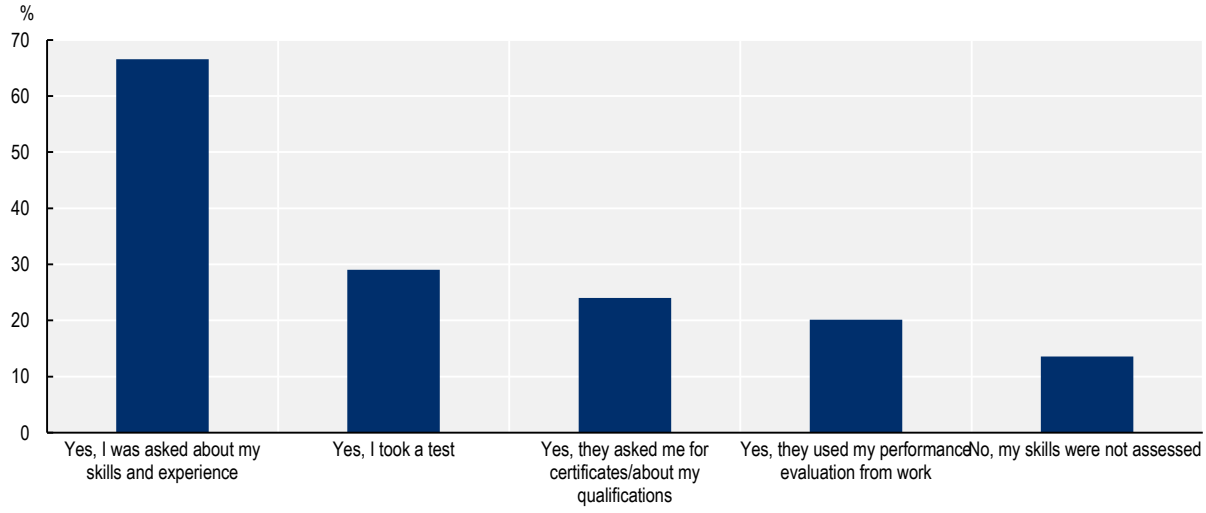
Assessing an individual's unique set of skills

Assessing an adult's skills is a necessary first step in advising them about possible occupations to consider and building a personalised career development roadmap. For adults who are in need of retraining but are not aware of their options, carrying out a thorough assessment of their skills constitutes an essential starting point to design individualised reskilling pathways.

The most common approach is to interview clients and ask them questions about their work experience, qualifications and current skills (Figure 3.5). Two-thirds (67%) of users were asked in interviews about their skills and experience, and 24% were asked about their qualifications and certificates. Interviews provide highly useful information that helps counsellors assemble a well-rounded perspective on the user's potential and needs. It also helps to build trust and rapport with the individual. But interviews are subjective, and tend to rely heavily on job history or educational qualifications as a proxy for skills. Some individuals may possess skills not fully used or not used at all at work, making their job history a less than perfect proxy for what they can actually do (Quintini, 2011[14]). Moreover, individual interviews are potentially costly in terms of the staff time required to conduct them.

Figure 3.5. Methods for assessing skills

Percentage of adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past five years, by method for assessing skills



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Career guidance advisors sometimes complement interviews with self-assessment tests. These tests generally ask the user to rate their comfort using particular skills. Common self-assessment tests employed by advisors include interest and personality tests, psychometric tests, and vocational aptitude tests (Table 3.2). An advantage with a self-assessment is that it may prompt users to take stock of skills they acquired outside of formal employment or education. For instance, the European Commission developed a skills assessment tool designed to be used by organisations providing services to third-country nationals.

The tool prompts the interviewer to collect information about skills the interviewee acquired while working but also those acquired outside of formal employment, e.g. childcare, volunteering. **Ireland**'s skills measurement tool (My Journey) prompts users to self-assess their capacity in five soft skills: literacy and numeracy; confidence, goal setting and self-efficacy; communication skills; connection with others; and general work readiness.

Though still rare, skills profiling tools provide a more objective measure of a person's abilities by having them complete a test that can be graded against an answer key. Benchmarking performance against other test takers provides an objective metric. By assessing abilities beyond those documented through work history and certificates, skills profiling tools support flexible pathways and redeployment of adults from declining to growing jobs and sectors.[1] They have been used for migrants and refugees, as well as for specific skill domains such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills, but have not yet been developed for a broad range of users or skills. The PES in **Italy** and **Spain** piloted an online version of the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills to test the literacy, numeracy and digital skills of jobseekers (Education and Skills Online). In **France**, the government made available an online tool for testing, developing and certifying digital skills (https://pix.fr/).

There is a growing role for advisors to help individuals obtain formal recognition of prior learning (RPL), i.e. the skills they have acquired informally (Cedefop, 2009[15]). Recognition of prior learning is a more involved process than skills profiling and can lead to formal certification for skills acquired outside of formal training. The process involves demonstrating achievement of competencies, often by preparing a portfolio of relevant work or demonstrating one's ability to carry out tasks in practice. RPL can shorten retraining pathways by giving adults credit for skills they already have, and thus accelerating their transition to new jobs or sectors. Career guidance advisors can help adults to navigate RPL processes. Portugal's Qualifica Centres and Finland's competency-based VET programmes combine career guidance with support in recognition of prior learning processes (Box 3.3).

Box 3.3. Support for recognition of prior learning processes within career guidance

Finland

Adults who want to complete a competence-based qualification (CBQ) or a preparatory training for a competence-based qualification, can have their skills validated. In order to complete a CBQ, candidates must demonstrate certain skills and competences required in the profession, outlined in the Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications defined by the Finnish National Board of Education. Education providers are responsible for providing personalised guidance and support to students as they carry out the validation process. Adults receive a personalised learning plan that charts and recognises the skills they already have, those they need, and in which learning environments they can be acquired. Certificates are awarded by Qualification Committees (*Näyttötutkintotoimikunta*), which are sector-specific tripartite bodies that oversee the quality of the provision of CBQs.

Portugal

The Portuguese Qualifica programme has as an objective to increase qualification levels and improve the employability of low-skilled adults, providing them with skills needed in the labour market. It also aims at reducing illiteracy rates and adapting the offer and the training network to the needs of the labour market. In addition to a first diagnosis and provision of information and guidance, individuals can also take part in a recognition of prior learning procedure. The RPL can lead to total or partial certification. In case of partial certification, an individual receives a personal qualification plan and is encouraged to take part in further training or education activities. The RPL takes place both by self-evaluation and as an evaluation by the Qualifica team.

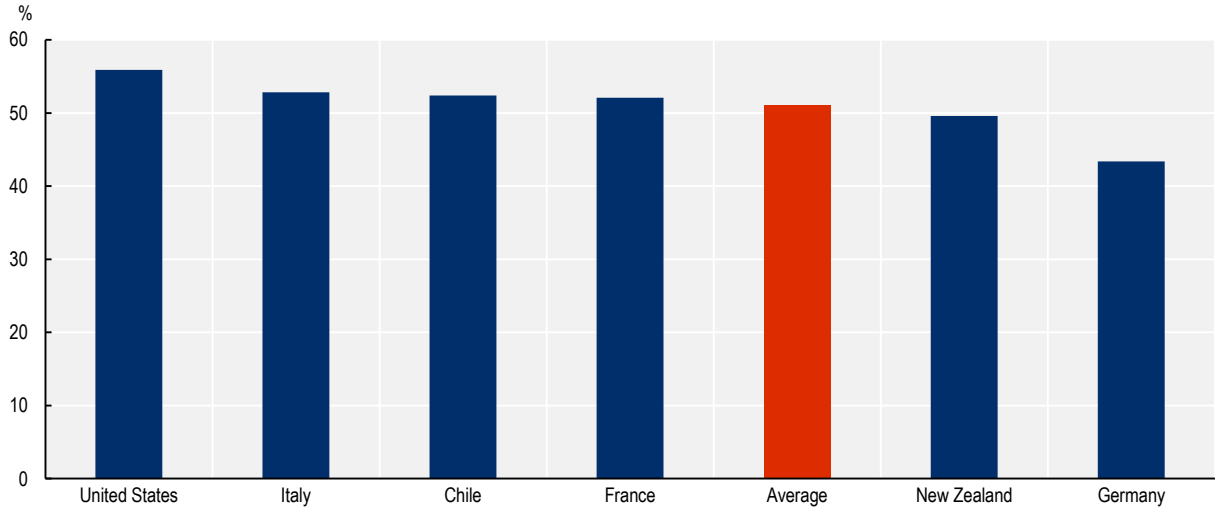
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

Personalised career development roadmap

A personalised career development roadmap – also called an individual or personal action plan or training plan – spells out a sequence of activities that should be taken to achieve an individual's training or employment objectives. It starts from an assessment of an individual's skills, aspirations and background. Only half (51%) of career guidance users confirmed that they received a personalised career development roadmap as an output from their career guidance service (Figure 3.6). If adults are involved in the process of developing their own career development roadmap, this can be a powerful tool to motivate them to take informed action towards their goals. According to the SCGA, receiving a personalised career development roadmap increases an adult's probability of achieving employment outcomes by 25% (Table 3.1). It also raises the probability that they will enrol in an education or training programme by 7%.

Figure 3.6. Personalised career development roadmap

Percentage of adults who spoke to a career guidance advisor over the past five years who report receiving a personalised career development roadmap



Note: The average includes the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. A personalised career development roadmap (also called an individual action plan) is a resource prepared by the advisor based on the user's background and skills. It sets out a planned sequence of activities to help the user towards achieving their education and employment objectives.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Personalised career development roadmaps are a required output in many career guidance programmes (Table 3.2). **Australia**'s Career Transition Assistance programme gives mature job seekers a skills assessment which informs the development of a personalised Career Pathway Plan that provides information on retraining opportunities in line with local labour market needs. In **Flanders** (Belgium), the VDAB provides users with an individualised action plan immediately upon registering. After carrying out a self-assessment, the user receives an online account with personalised tips on how and where to search for a job, as well as suggestions for jobs to apply to, based on their profile and preferences. The VDAB is also experimenting with an 'Amazon model', using big data to make job suggestions based on an individual's personal and work experience. As mentioned above, a personalised learning plan is a required output from **Finland**'s education guidance towards obtaining a competency-based qualification (Table 3.2).

Tailoring information and advice in online portals

Online career guidance portals are most useful when they provide tailored information and advice. The best ones start from an assessment of the user's skills, and then provide tailored information and advice based on the results of that skills assessment. For instance, **New Zealand**'s online career guidance portal, CareersQuest, invites users to complete a self-assessment. Then it suggests occupations that align with the user's skills and interests based on the self-assessment. **Spain** is using artificial intelligence to develop a digital profiling tool that tailors the information provided by SEPE's online guidance platform (www.sepe.es). The **Czech Republic**'s JOBHUB helps users appraise their skills and interests using a self-evaluation tool, and then suggests occupations that might be a good fit. **Greece**'s Internet Portal for Adults operated by EOPPEP (http://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/) suggests activities that would help users to develop their career based on three psychometric online tests (a job interests test, a values test, and a vocational decisions test) as well as career management skills exercises. Since March 2020, **Japanese** O-Net enables workers to appraise their current skill set based on their job history. Users are then shown the skills gap between the job they want and their current skillset, and Japanese O-Net describes the training pathways that would lead them there. On Japan's Hello Work Internet Service Site, users can create their own "my-page" to see their job search history, and receive tailored job advertisements from PES offices. **England**'s National Career Service website (https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/skills-assessment) includes a self-assessment tool asking a battery of questions about what users like to do and which skills they like to use. With this information, it suggests jobs they might be interested in pursuing.

Features that enable speaking or chatting with someone are another way to tailor the information and advice provided in online career guidance portals. Some users require opportunities to talk through the online information with someone to grasp what it means for them personally. Online portals sometimes include features that enable interaction with someone who can help them interpret the LMI. For instance, **Poland**'s Talent Development Center (*Centrum Rozwoju Talentów*) website has a live chat option that allows for direct contact with professional advisors from the Centre. See Chapter 2 for more country examples.

Table 3.2. Tools used to tailor career guidance service provision

Country	Programme	Methods used to assess skills	Do individuals receive a personalised career development roadmap?	Details
Austria	PES	Interview, online and other tests in some provinces	Yes (in Vienna only)	/
Belgium	PES; VDAB	Mostly face to face interviews; Methods vary from a questionnaire, to standardised testing to full assessment.	Yes	Plan d'action is mutually agreed between the job counsellor and the jobseeker.
	Cité des métiers	It depends on the guidance activity selected	No	/
	Dispositif d'orientation tout au long de la vie (OTLAV)	Skills test	No	/
	Carrefour Emploi Formation Orientation (CEFO)	Skills test	No	/

Country	Programme	Methods used to assess skills	Do individuals receive a personalised career development roadmap?	Details
	Individualised Support	Interviews, skills identification tools (skills screenings, skills recognition, recognition of learning outcomes, occupation positioning, basic skills positioning, language tests). Results of these tests and services are included in the jobseeker's dossier.	Yes	An individual action plan (limited to the unemployment period) is elaborated together with the counsellor.
	Essais-métiers (Jobs trials)	Formative evaluation of basic job-related skills, as well as an assessment of appetite for the job.	Yes	The objectives of the vocational training are defined by taking into account previously acquired skills.
	Phase de détermination de projet socio-professionnel	Collective and individual modules assess the candidate's knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills.	Yes	They receive a personalised action plan with objectives and various evaluations (self-assessments, team check-ins, etc.).
	Career vouchers	Profiling individual skills and talents to increase awareness of one's own potential is an aim of this programme.	Yes	A personal development plan is the output accompanying each career voucher in this programme.
	Berufslaufbahnberatung des Arbeitsamts der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens	Interviews and tests (psychological interest, aptitude, ability and competence tests).	Yes	The jobseeker who attends a counselling interview works out an action plan with the counsellor.
Chile	Programa de Intermediación Laboral	Interviews and various tests: Interest and Preference Instruments (Holland Test, Prediger Test), and personality instruments (DISC Test, Cattell's 16 factor personality test, Personality Inventory for Salespeople, MBTI Personality Indicator)	No	/
Czech Republic	Career counseling in PES	Balance diagnostics	Yes	Final report on balance diagnostics, individual action plan
Denmark	eVejledning	Skills are not assessed	No	
Estonia	Career Councelling "Karjäärinõustamine"	Skills are not assessed	No	/
France	Conseil en evolution professionnelle (CEP)	Evaluation of skills during the diagnostic or follow-up interview with occupational psychologist. Use of digital tools like "My professional potential" which identifies and develops one's skills in relation to labour market needs. Users can request a skills assessment by an occupational psychologist as part of "Activ'projet".	Yes	A document summarising the career development project as discussed with the adviser is given to the beneficiary together with the strategy for its implementation, e.g. training eligible for the personal training account (CPF).
Greece	Various programmes	Counsellors help each individual identify their competences in their occupational profile using self-assessment questionnaires.	Yes	A personal action plan is a necessary outcome of these interventions.
Ireland	Adult Educational Guidance Services	Holistic vocational assessment processes which can include the use of psychometric tests.	Yes	An individual plan is developed with the client, but this is not based on a "national" template requirement.
Italy	Euroguidance (Italy)	Skills are not assessed	Yes	One of the services provided by PES, within the personalised service agreement, is to elaborate and agree on a plan for active job search to be carried out by the unemployed.
Japan	One-on-one career consultation at PES	Interview	Yes	Individual's activities are recorded on their Job Card

Country	Programme	Methods used to assess skills	Do individuals receive a personalised career development roadmap?	Details
	Career development support centres (CDSC)	Interview	Yes	Individual's activities are recorded on their Job Card
Korea	Employment Success Package Program (ESPP)	ESPP conducts an evaluation of the employability of jobseekers, vocational psychological testing, and individual counselling.	Yes	ESPP establishes an Individual Action Plan (IAP) based on skills assessments and provides employment services such as skills development and job placement based on the IAP.
Lithuania	Career counsellors at the Employment service	An assessment is carried out to assign the unemployed to one of three groups (high, medium or limited employment opportunities).	Yes	Individual employment activity plans are drawn for the unemployed who have registered with PES. The activity plan states the mutual obligations of the unemployed and PES with respect to the provision of labour market services and reporting on the jobseeker's job search.
Mexico	Employment Support Program, Labor Intermediation Subprogram	Interview	No	/
Netherlands		/	Yes	Different options for portfolio
Poland	Career guidance activities directly addressing adults carried out at local and regional level at the labour offices	/	Yes	As a part of an individual action plan (IPD)
Portugal	Programa Qualifica	Passaporte Qualificat, Portfolio, curriculum analysis	Yes	Each individual develops their own personal vocational plan
	IEFP (PES) – Guidance Services for unemployed	Interviews, report made by the unemployed person and his performance during the exercises	Yes	A Personal Employment Plan is defined and contracted with the unemployed. Steps may include guidance interventions and training actions.
Slovenia	Employment Service of Slovenia	Interviews, questionnaires	Yes	Individual action plan
Spain	National Employment System	One-on-one interview	Yes	Guidance advisors design customised pathways for each long-term unemployed.
Sweden	STOM – *Stöd och Matchning* (Support and Matching)	It is up to the private providers and their guidance advisors to decide which methods they use in profiling skills	No	/
Turkey	Job and Vocational Counseling	Interview	No	/
United States	WIOA title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs	Comprehensive and specialised assessments to determine the skill levels and service needs of adults, dislocated workers, and youth job seekers.	Yes	Local area determination

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

3.3.3. Standardising training and qualifications of career guidance advisors

Standardising training and qualifications for career guidance advisors can promote high quality service delivery. Career guidance advisors should have an understanding of the specific theories and methods central to career guidance. How advisors are expected to acquire such specialised knowledge varies

across and sometimes within countries. This section summarises the minimum training and qualification requirements for employing advisors in specific career guidance programmes. It also describes the role of continuing professional development and professional certifications in standardising the training and qualifications of career guidance advisors.

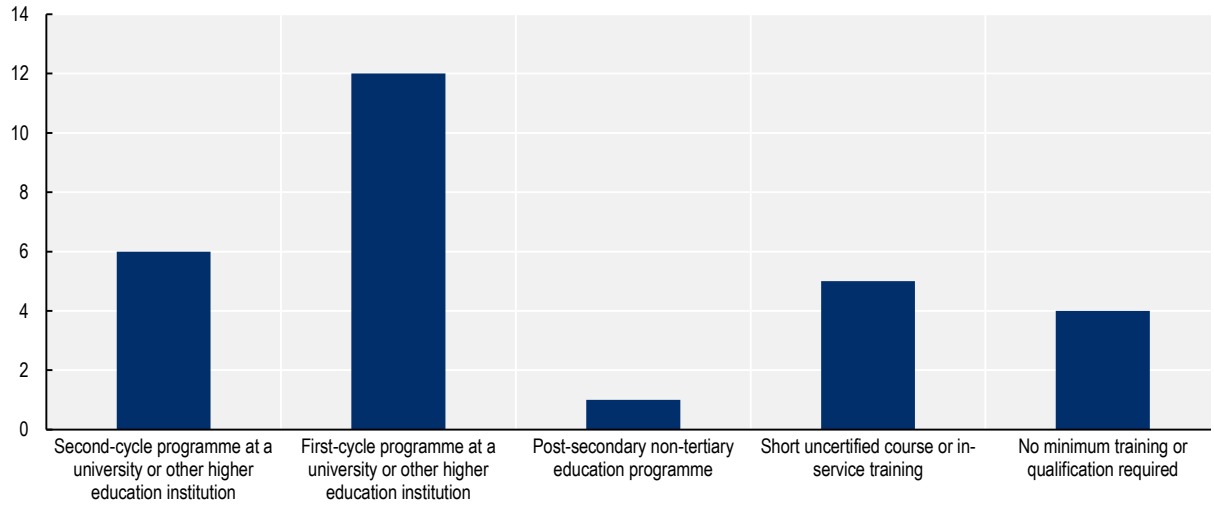
Minimum training and qualification requirements

In most countries, 'career guidance advisor' (or its national equivalent) is not a regulated profession, meaning that there is no legislation specifying which certificate, license or registration must be attained to use the occupation title. Nevertheless, even if not written in legislation, many countries do define minimum training and qualifications requirements for employing advisors in specific programmes. Minimum requirements for training and qualifications often also form the basis of professional certifications.

The OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults', polled countries about whether advisors working with adults must have any minimum training or qualifications to practice in their country (Figure 3.7). A tertiary degree is generally a minimum requirement for most adult career guidance programmes: in 18 out of 29 career guidance programmes, a first-cycle or second-cycle programme at a university or other higher education institution was required. Only four programmes had no minimum training or qualification requirement, while five required a short uncertified course or in-service training.

Figure 3.7. Minimum required training or qualification of career guidance advisors

Number of country/programme responses



Note: A total of 18 OECD countries responded to this question about 29 programmes. Countries sometimes reported multiple responses when qualification requirements varied for different programmes within the same country.
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

While a tertiary degree is a common minimum requirement for most publicly subsidised programmes, that qualification may not provide any specialised training in career guidance. OECD (2004[16]) identified five main training and qualification models for advisors, as outlined in Table 3.3. Each of these models vary in terms of how advisors are expected to gain skills and knowledge to provide career guidance.

Table 3.3. Training and qualification models

Model	Training and qualification requirements
Specialised career guidance qualifications	Tertiary-level qualifications that provide specialised training in career guidance.
General counselling and guidance qualifications	Tertiary-level qualifications that provide general counselling and guidance training, but no or only minimal training in career-focused guidance.
Basic and general qualifications	Tertiary-level qualifications in broad fields that are related to career guidance but do not provide specific training in career guidance itself.
Limited training	No specific training in career guidance required. The only requirement is a relatively brief course run by tertiary education institutions.
In-service training	No specific training in career guidance required. The only requirement is a relatively brief course offered by the employer.

Source: Framework developed in OECD (2004[16]), *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264105669-en.

A growing number of countries require that advisors have tertiary qualifications with specialised training in career guidance. The **German** Federal Employment Agency trains career guidance professionals at the University of Applied Labour Science in a dedicated bachelor's study course (Career Guidance for Education, Career and Employment) (Cedefop, 2020[17]). Modules include intensive training in counselling techniques for different target groups, as well as training on the labour market and education system, recent trends, and sociology. The University of Applied Labour Science also offers a part-time master's course in Labour Market Oriented Guidance, which most employed career guidance specialists have obtained. To obtain a permit to work as a career counsellor in **Quebec** (Canada), both a bachelor's and a masters' degree in career counselling must be completed, which include modules on the production and dissemination of labour market information, online sources of labour market information, and how to incorporate labour market information in career counselling. The same permit allows the counsellor to work in different settings, including schools and universities (60% of graduates), employment and rehabilitation services (20%), in private practice, human resources or skill development departments of large companies, and in the mental health sector (Cedefop, 2016[18]). In **Alberta** (Canada), employers are increasingly seeking applicants who have a certificate, diploma, or degree in career development. The Career Development Association of Alberta grants the Certified Career Development Professional (CCDP) designation to applicants who meet educational, experiential, and ethical requirements.

A common model is to require a tertiary qualification in any one of a broad range of fields related to career guidance – including psychology, education, economics, and social sciences – but without any specific training in guidance or counselling. Alternatively, advisors may be expected to have a general qualification in guidance or counselling, but without any specialised training in career guidance. In **Finland**, vocational guidance psychologists in the PES must have a master's degree in psychology. In **France**, guidance professionals working in schools or universities must hold a master's degree in psychology and, after passing a selective competition, they undertake a one-year university training in psychology, sociology, economics and educational sciences (Cedefop, 2020[19]).

While specialised qualifications in career guidance are becoming more common, many countries still require only general tertiary qualifications with no specific focus on career guidance. This general model is often used when no academic programmes providing specialised training in career guidance are available in the country. A risk with this approach is that career guidance advisors may lack the specialised skills, attitudes and knowledge to provide high-quality career guidance. Lack of specialised training may also result in a varying standard of practice across providers.

OECD (2004[16]) called on countries to develop competency frameworks as a first step in addressing this issue. Competency frameworks spell out what career guidance advisors should know and do, and form a foundation for designing training and qualifications. They are useful in recruitment and allow advisors to self-assess and benchmark their competencies. Many countries have developed competency frameworks

(Table 3.4). In **Greece**, the competency framework for career guidance advisors developed by EOPPEP forms the basis for a system of accreditation, as well as a national professional register. In **Germany**, both the bachelor's and the master's programmes discussed above are based upon the Federal Employment Agency's "guidance concepts" (*Beratungskonzepte),* which is a competency framework that is part of the country's quality assurance system (Cedefop, 2020[17]).

Table 3.4. Competence frameworks for career guidance advisors

Country	Use of competence framework?	Details
Australia	Yes	The Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners
Austria	Yes	MEVOC standards
Belgium	Yes	"Competent" is being integrated in the PES database and counselors' workflow
Canada	Yes	The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners
Czech Republic	/	In 2015, three professional qualifications were created: Career counselor for employment, Career counselor for endangered, risky and disadvantaged groups of the population, Career counselor for educational and professional career
Denmark	No	
Estonia	Yes	In Eesti Töötukassa there is a competency framework for career practitioners. Additionally, there is a professional qualifications standard for career specialists and professional exams are organised by the Estonian Association of Career Counsellors (http://www.kny.ee/).
France	Yes	France Compétences has set up a set of specifications to which advisors must comply. However, these specifications are deliberately open-ended, in order to leave room for manoeuvre so that advisers can adapt and personalise their service offer, and to stimulate innovative practices.
Germany	Yes	BeQu Competence Profile; Federal Employment Agency's "guidance concepts" (*Beratungskonzepte)*
Greece	Yes	The competence framework for career guidance counsellors is defined in the relevant occupation outline of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)
Ireland	Yes	Programme Recognition Framework which includes competences required of Guidance Counsellors working in schools and FET contexts (www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Programme-Recognition-Framework-Guidance-Counselling.pdf)
Italy	Yes	Competences are established at regional level (see Atlante delle Qualificazioni INAPP, https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/ricerca_testo_qnqr_list.php)
Lithuania	No	/
Mexico	Yes	Technical standard of certification of competences, issued by the National Council for Standardization and Certification of Labor Competencies (CONOCER, by its acronym in Spanish)
Portugal	No	/
Spain	No	/
Sweden	No	/
Turkey	Yes	Job and vocational counselling qualification certificate
United States	Local area determination	/

Note: "/": no response provided by country.
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults' plus author elaborations based on desk research.

In some PES programmes, the only requirement is a relatively brief course offered by a tertiary institution. Case workers in **Ireland**'s PES complete training through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, as well as a certificate in employability services provided through the National College of Ireland. Also common, is for the PES to hire people with no specific qualifications in career guidance, and then to provide them with in-service training. Generally this in-service training leads to no formal qualifications and covers a range of administrative and procedural aspects of their work as well as client-interaction skills (Cedefop, 2009[15]). The length of training varies from a few months to a full year. The **Austrian** PES, for instance, puts new recruits through a year-long in-house training programme.

Only 4 of 29 programmes reported in the policy questionnaire require no minimum training or qualification. In such cases, relevant professional experience may be prioritised over qualifications or training. Managers of VDAB centres in **Flanders** (Belgium) must have at least three years of professional experience in the sector of career guidance, career coaching, outplacement or job seeker guidance. Counsellors in VDAB centres must have either a bachelor's degree or two years of relevant field experience. However, candidates who lack relevant qualifications or work experience can obtain a validated attestation of "otherwise obtained competences" through a recognition of prior learning procedure. In **Korea**, career guidance advisors working in Employment Centres or Workplus Centres must first pass a civil servant recruitment test.

Box 3.4. Competency frameworks

Austria

In Austria, career guidance advisors use the European Career Guidance Certificate (ECGC), which is based on the MEVOC standards (Quality Manual for Educational and Vocational Counselling). The MEVOC standards, a Leonardo da Vinci project of the European Union, were developed under the leadership of Austria (ibw – *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft*) in cooperation with 19 partner institutions from nine countries. They describe quality standards for educational and vocational counsellors. Based on the MEVOC standards, a competence grid was developed with 35 required competences in the following four areas: education, career, counselling practice, personality and ICT competences. To achieve the ECGC, counsellors can complete an online test and an assessment centre.

Canada

The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (S&G) outline the competencies needed to provide effective and people-centred guidance across the lifespan. Canada's S&Gs were the first competency framework developed internationally in the field, and have served as a model for other countries. The S&Gs were funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and matched by contributions from career development partners. The objectives in developing these national standards were: to define career development as a legitimate specialisation; to provide a foundation for designing training; to provide quality assurance to the public; to recognise and validate the diverse skill sets of practitioners working in the field; and to create a common voice and vocabulary for career development. The competencies are organised in three areas: core competencies, specialisation competencies and ethical principles. Five provinces in Canada have developed professional certifications linked to the S&Gs (British Colombia, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia).

European Commission

The European Commission published the European Reference Competence Profile for PES and EURES counsellors. The profile is intended to serve as a reference tool for European countries in their recruitment and training of PES counsellors, while recognising that each country will adapt it based on their particular business model and labour supply. Three competence areas make up the profile: foundational competences (general practitioners' values and skills), client interaction competences (working with jobseekers and employers) as well as supporting competences (systems and technical). The development of the profile was initiated in response to the PES to PES Dialogue programme, which found room for improvement in the professionalisation of PES counsellors.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

Continuing professional development

The skills and knowledge needed to offer high-quality guidance services change regularly with developments in technology and the labour market, making continuing professional development an essential element of quality service delivery. Across the 21 OECD countries that responded to a question about refresher training in the policy questionnaire, only 9 cited that career guidance advisors are required to participate in ongoing refresher training, ranging in frequency from several times per year to once every five years. For instance, the Employment Service of **Slovenia** offers an annual catalogue of internal professional courses and trainings (in person or e-learning) and there is budget available to refer counsellors to external professional courses, trainings, conferences, study visits, and seminars. In **Japan**, refresher training for Career Consultants in the PES is mandatory and ongoing self-development is expected. Under Japan's new national qualification for career counselling, counsellors must renew their certification once every five years with a minimum of 38 hours of training (OECD, 2021[20]). In **Italy**, career guidance advisors working as Eurodesk Mobility Advisors must adhere to an EU level Competence Framework which requires regular refresher courses. In **Estonia**, *Eesti Töötukassa* organises training sessions and provides guidelines and information materials for advisors. It also pays for its employees' professional qualification standard exams and encourages its career counsellors to take the exam.

Continuing professional development helps advisors develop and maintain digital skills and knowledge of the labour market. The need for advisors to keep abreast of labour market information was discussed earlier. Career guidance advisors also need to develop digital literacy skills amid rapid technological developments which have revolutionised career products and services, like online provision or supporting adults in their search for labour market information (National Careers Council, 2013[21]). The need for digital skills became even more urgent during the COVID-19 health pandemic as career guidance provision shifted online (see Chapter 2). To hone digital skills, some countries have experimented with online or blended learning approaches to continuing professional development (Bimrose and Brown, 2019[22]).

The European Public Employment Service Network also identified the increasing need for career guidance advisors to develop teaching skills, as their role in the PES shifts from job broker to facilitator or coach (European Public Employment Services, n.d.[23]). This means being prepared to teach career management skills, like self-awareness and labour market research, in order to help adults navigate complex career transitions.

Professional certifications

Professional certifications signal that a career practitioner has the qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge to provide high-quality career guidance. In some cases, professional certifications may be required for employment. They are particularly useful as a way for private practitioners to advertise their credentials to potential clients. In addition to minimum qualifications and work experience, applicants must usually demonstrate participation in continuing professional development.

For instance, the **United Kingdom** Career Development Institute developed the Register of Career Development Professionals. To qualify for the register, applicants must demonstrate that they are qualified in a career development subject to a minimum of QCF Level 6/SCQF Level 11,[2] adhere to the CDI's Code of Ethics, and undertake and record a minimum of 25 hours of continuing professional development each year. Those without formal qualifications may gain entrance to the register via a competency route, based on the National Occupational Standards. Similarly, in **Ireland**, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors maintains a register of accredited counsellors.

3.3.4. Certifying providers against quality standards in service delivery

Quality standards in service delivery establish basic requirements for how career guidance is provided. They are set either by a public authority or by the provider, and can govern all aspects of service delivery

including professional standards, partnerships, labour market information, client satisfaction, evaluation and leadership (Dodd et al., 2019[24]). Only 7 of the 21 countries that responded to the OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career guidance for Adults,' reported employing quality standards in service delivery.[3]

Certification against a quality standard can be a mandatory condition for providers to receive public funds. But voluntary standards also exist, and can be a useful tool for quality improvement. Obtaining certification against voluntary standards is a way for private providers to signal the quality of their service to potential users. Some voluntary standards do not offer certification, but instead provide a framework for providers to use towards quality improvement.

Mandatory quality standards

With mandatory quality standards, guidance providers must demonstrate that they meet the standards in order to receive public funds. The **Flemish** Government introduced a national quality framework to assure quality under the PES' career voucher system. All service providers – public or private – who offer career guidance under the voucher programme must abide by the national quality framework. **France** has put in place quality specifications (*cahier de charges)* to which career guidance practitioners who participate in the national career guidance programme (*Conseil en evolution professionnelle*, CEP) must conform. Providers must meet eligibility requirements to be certified against the quality label (*orientation pour tous*). In **England** (United Kingdom), all organisations that receive public funds have to meet national quality standards. All providers who deliver the National Careers Service must achieve the criteria set in the Matrix Standard – a quality assurance system set up specifically for career guidance providers. For other guidance services, these standards are voluntary. The quality standard used by **Austria**'s free educational guidance programme and **Korea**'s Employment Success Package Program provide other examples of mandatory country-specific quality standards (Box 3.5).

Standards are often set at national level, while allowing for regional adaptation. The **Austrian** PES (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) sets central minimum standards for service delivery, including access to up-to-date and gender-specific career information, as well as minimum duration of client interviews. Standards are developed at national level, but each AMS can decide how to put them into practice (Cedefop, 2020[25]). In the **United States**, American Job Centres must pass a certification process that establishes a minimum level of quality and consistency of services across the state. The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act requires the State Workforce Development Board (WDB), in consultation with firms and local WDBs, to set objective criteria to use when certifying American Job Centres.

Countries do not always develop country-specific quality standards, or even quality standards specific to career guidance services. They sometimes use generic standards, which are intended to be used by any organisation, not limited to career guidance providers. To become a jobactive provider in **Australia**, for example, potential providers must adhere to the Department of Employment's Quality Principles, as well as obtain certification against the generic ISO 9001: 2015 quality standard.[4]

Box 3.5. Mandatory quality standards in career guidance

Austria

In Austria, providers of the country's free adult educational guidance programme must be certified by the IBOBB (Information, Counselling and Orientation for Education and Career) certification. The certification was introduced in 2009 to support the country's National Lifelong Guidance Strategy and 53 certification procedures have been carried out since then. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research awards the certification. The review procedure includes an on-site assessment of the impartiality of the guidance being provided and how tailored it is to customers' needs. The quality criteria are available in a handbook that describes the procedure for certification.

Belgium

Under the *Cité des Métiers* network, which started in France in 1991 and now operates in seven countries, a provider must obtain the *Cité des Métiers* quality label in order to open. The label is managed by *Universcience – Cité de Sciences et de l'Industrie*. Acquiring the label involves demonstrating that certain service conditions are met: cost-free services for all individuals without a prior appointment; a welcoming space that is well sign-posted; partnerships with a wide variety of industries and services; and neutral information. Career guidance counsellors must also undergo regular training about services and labour market opportunities.

In Belgium, the Cités appoint a quality referent from their professional team, who finds a balance between implementing nation-wide quality standards and adapting their implementation to local conditions. Being part of a large network of Cités is meant to facilitate the exchange of best practices and the continuous improvement of services.

France

All providers of France's professional development consulting programme (*conseil en évolution professionnelle*, CEP) must abide by the *cahier des charges*. The *cahier* specifies objectives, beneficiary groups, service provision, methods, and the skill requirements of advisors. It also specifies how providers go about promoting, coordinating and monitoring the CEP. The guidelines established by the *cahier* are designed to be broad enough that providers can experiment with innovative practices and adapt the service to each adult's needs.

Korea

The Employment Success Package Program (ESPP) is carried out by the Job Centres and PES for low-income workers and by contracted private employment agencies for youth and middle-aged workers. Every year, the government evaluates the comprehensive performance of all private agencies to assure the quality improvement of employment services. To participate in the programme the following year, private agencies must achieve a minimum score evaluated based on quantitative and qualitative performance criteria.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

Voluntary quality standards

Voluntary quality standards provide a metric for quality improvement, signal quality to potential users when certification is obtained, and promote consistency of service across jurisdictions. The **UK**'s Matrix Standard is a requirement for some public career guidance programmes, but it also serves as a voluntary benchmarking tool that allows providers to improve their service and receive accreditation. Thirty percent of accredited providers seek the Matrix Standard for reasons other than obtaining publicly-funded contracts (BIS, 2015[26]). The majority of providers who sought the standard voluntarily vouch for it improving the quality of their service, the reputation of their organisation, and the competency of their staff. Similarly, obtaining **Germany**'s BeQu quality label is intended to put providers through a voluntary quality improvement process (Box 3.6).

In **Greece**, voluntary quality standards signal quality to potential end users, and also offer competitive advantages to career guidance providers. Greece's EOPPEP (National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance) developed quality standards based on the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) quality assurance framework. EOPPEP's register of approved private providers informs the public about available and high-quality providers. The Ministry of Labour also uses the register as a selection device for giving preferential support to providers when applying for European programmes.

Voluntary quality standards also promote consistent service quality across diverse regions. The Blueprint for Lifework framework has been developed in Canada, the United States and Australia (Hooley et al., 2013[27]). In Canada, the Blueprint framework is implemented on a voluntary basis by government agencies, professional associations, community agencies and corporations in most provinces and territories (Box 3.6).

Box 3.6. Voluntary quality standards in career guidance

Canada

Canada's Blueprint framework articulates the concept of career management skills for a range of audiences (careers workers, policy makers, teachers and end users). It outlines the career management skills necessary to support an individual over the life course in their education, training and employment decisions, and it specifies different expected outcomes for different age groups (e.g. early years, primary/elementary school, high school, post-secondary and adult populations). It specifies ten broad competencies in three areas: personal management; learning; and career. The Blueprint is a companion piece to the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Practitioners. Career, curriculum and human resources specialists in public and private agencies from every region of Canada collaborated to produce the Blueprint. The Blueprint is not accredited, meaning that providers cannot obtain formal certification.

Germany

Germany's National Guidance Forum developed a quality concept in guidance (BeKo) in cooperation with many actors in the guidance landscape. This concept has three pillars. First, a set of quality standards, called BeQu, for guidance in education, occupation and employment. These support both counsellors and guidance institutions in further developing the quality and professionalism of their services. Second, a quality development framework, and third, a competence profile that outlines the competencies required of a career guidance advisor. Any provider of career guidance that would like to obtain the standard can receive support from the National Guidance Forum. To use the BeQu quality label, providers must formally apply to the National Guidance Forum, commit to using the quality standards, and have participated in a mandatory workshop.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

3.3.5. Monitoring outcomes

Monitoring outcomes of career guidance is carried out for a number of purposes: to help providers evaluate and improve their performance, to hold the system to account, and to measure the economic and social value of activities relative to their cost. This section focuses on the first two as important components of a quality assurance system.

In the OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults,' only 10 out of 19 country respondents said that they assessed the effectiveness of their career guidance programmes against pre-set objectives.

Quality of career guidance is generally measured by looking at employment, wages, training participation, unemployment benefit receipt, and user satisfaction. Outcomes can be measured using a variety of monitoring and evaluation methods, implemented either by external quality assurance bodies, research groups and academics, or internally by self-evaluations.

Type of outcomes measured

Employment outcomes are a common way to assess the effectiveness of career guidance services or re-employment programmes that include career guidance services as a component. In a systematic review of re-employment programmes across the **United States** (which included career guidance services), evaluators tracked short-term and long-term employment, earnings, and the receipt of Unemployment Insurance benefits. **Austria**'s PES (BIS) monitors changes to employment status 12 months after the counselling service. In the Job Centres run by the **UK**'s Department of Work and Pensions, outcome measures focus on the number of people who transition into employment. In **Australia**'s PES (jobactive), providers are selected on the basis of their performance placing jobseekers into jobs, taking into account differences in caseload and regional labour market characteristics. Providers are also partially funded by outcome-based fees, which reward employment matches if a jobseeker remains employed for four weeks, 12 weeks and 26 weeks.

Training participation is another commonly measured outcome. In **Slovenia**, national network coordinators of lifelong guidance centres monitor whether clients participate in a training programme (either formal or non-formal) after they receive guidance. In evaluating the Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners (GOAL) project, follow-up surveys asked users whether or not they had attained or made progress towards their educational goals, as well as whether they had enrolled in a course (Carpentieri et al., 2018[28]). Other training-related outcomes include greater educational and training attainment, improved retention rates in education and training programmes, and higher levels of skills.

Changes to employment or training status may not occur in the months immediately following the career guidance service, and may therefore escape observation during monitoring and evaluation exercises. Some evaluations consider shorter-term outcomes, like whether the individual has acquired new skills or knowledge as a result of counselling. In **Canada**, with help from the PRIME data management system, career development practitioners collect data on employment and training outcomes, but also the quality of job matches and incremental progress towards employability. By measuring progress along a continuum, rather than only focusing on whether or not someone became employed or entered a training programme, the tool is able to capture a richer picture of the impact of career guidance services.

Asking users about their satisfaction with the service is another way to assess quality. The **French** PES, Pôle Emploi, regularly surveys clients about their satisfaction with the services offered and France Compétence collects user satisfaction data about the public career guidance programme (*Conseil en Evolution Professionnel*, CEP) through quality and perceived usefulness questionnaires. The National Careers Service, which offers careers advice to adults and young people in **England** (United Kingdom), measures outcomes from face-to-face support through user satisfaction, i.e. whether the adult accepted the action plan produced and confirmed they have had high-quality career guidance. It also tracks

education and training outcomes, as well as whether the adult took steps to manage their career (e.g. uploading a CV online).

Often, a combination of outcomes are measured. The vocational guidance department of the **German** PES tracks an index composed of several indicators, including successful integration into apprenticeship training, sustainable integration after 6 months, duration of employment placement process, and a user satisfaction rating. Using this index, the quality of local services is benchmarked against clusters of regions with comparable labour market situations ((Plant, 2012[29]).

In addition to the above economic outcomes, evaluations also look at psychological or social impacts, including sense of well-being, self-confidence or insight, awareness of opportunities, and future direction. An evaluation of a group-based counselling programme in **Ontario** (Canada) conducted surveys of participants before and after the counselling. Participants were vulnerable adults facing significant employment challenges. While employment and training outcomes were measured, the focus was on whether participants had experienced changes to their overall well-being, motivation, and optimism about the future (OCWI, 2018[30]).

Methods used to assess outcomes

By collecting data on pre-set outcomes and making quality improvements based on the data, providers can improve service delivery. This involves putting in place processes to stimulate regular monitoring. Data may be collected by external bodies or as part of self-evaluations.

External bodies are often contracted to monitor career guidance services. When external audits find performance lacking, career guidance providers may be required to improve performance in order to maintain their right to continue delivering services. In **Sweden**, the Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) conducts regular inspections of education institutions, from pre-school to adult education, and one of their focus areas is guidance. The Inspectorate advises schools about what they would need to change to meet legislative requirements. In **Wallonia** (Belgium), career guidance centres must pass regular quality audits to continue receiving public funding to provide guidance for persons with disabilities (*Phase de determination de projet socio-professionel*). The audits, conducted every three years, assess objectives set by the Walloon Code of Social Action and Health (*Code Wallon de l'action sociale et de la santé*). **France** and **Scotland** both contract monitoring of outcomes to arms-length government agencies (Box 3.7).

Self-evaluations are another means for monitoring the outcomes of career guidance services. They can be a powerful tool for motivating service improvement, though risk of bias may be greater than with external audits. **Greece** produced self-evaluation guidelines for career guidance advisors that align with its National Quality Assurance System of Guidance Services. Any gaps in service provision identified by the self-evaluations are discussed with stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. **Portugal**'s Qualifica Centres must submit data on user enrolment, referral to education and training pathways, and recognition of prior learning activities to the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education (ANQEP) on a monthly basis. ANQEP analyses the data and sends it back to the Qualifica Centres in order to encourage self-evaluation and quality improvement.

Box 3.7. Monitoring carried out by external bodies

France

The French Government entrusts France Compétence with monitoring the career guidance programme (*Conseil d'Évolution Professionelle)* at the national level. At the regional level, monitoring is carried out by regional inter-professional joint committees that send an annual report to France Compétence. France Compétence regularly collects user satisfaction data through "quality and perceived usefulness" questionnaires. It also collects data directly from providers about beneficiaries, their reasons for seeking guidance, and the support they received.

Scotland

Skills Development Scotland works with Education Scotland to collect data to monitor the quality of its all-ages career guidance service. In 2013, Education Scotland started a six-year cycle of external assessment, with an aim to inspect delivery in each of Scotland's 32 local authority areas by March 2020. During external reviews, the review teams observe group activities, carry out one-to-one coaching sessions and hold discussions with users, staff and stakeholders. They consider information on the quality of career information, advice and guidance. The agreed quality framework supports Skills Development Scotland's internal self-assessment processes as well as the external review.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'; Skills Development Scotland website, https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/.

An impact evaluation provides a more rigorous measurement of outcomes than either external audits or self-evaluations. The main difference between monitoring outcomes and a real impact evaluation is that the latter uses a counterfactual to estimate what part of the observed outcome can be attributed to the guidance intervention. An impact evaluation of a career guidance programme would compare the outcomes of participants to the outcomes of similar adults who for non-systematic reasons did not participate in the guidance programme.

However, impact evaluations in the field of career guidance are rare due to the many challenges involved (Plant, 2012[29]). Career guidance entails bundles of activities, and it can be difficult to isolate which activities are most effective. It is also challenging to distinguish the impact of career guidance from other influences (e.g. advice from non-professionals, training, job search effort, or networking). Recipients of career guidance are also very different, and their needs are different. As noted in OECD (2004[16]), obtaining clear answers about impacts under these circumstances requires large-scale research with complex experimental designs.

Given the challenges, impact evaluations are rarely carried out by individual providers as part of routine monitoring exercises, but are instead conducted by public institutions or academic researchers to build research evidence that will improve the quality of career guidance services on a wider scale. Several countries invest in public programmes to better understand what works in employment and training services more generally, with career guidance as one component of these services. **Australia**'s Try, Test and Learn Fund tests innovative approaches to moving workers at risk of long-term welfare dependence onto a pathway towards employment. Through the Workforce Innovation Fund, the **United States**' Department of Labor evaluates innovative approaches to employment and training services and supports grantees in meeting rigorous evaluation requirements.

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Notes

[1] Skills profiling tools differ from the more generic "profiling tools" widely employed by public employment services to assess the job-finding prospects of jobseekers. With profiling tools, data are collected to estimate the jobseeker's risk of long-term unemployment. Those with a higher risk of long-term unemployment receive more intensive counselling and support services. Skills profiling tools test the skills of the individual for the purpose of identifying current skills and any skills gaps that would need to be addressed to pursue desired employment or education pathways.

[2] The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is the classification framework for further education qualifications in the United Kingdom. It has recently been replaced by the Regulatory Qualifications Framework (RQF). The Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SQCF) is a similar system that applies in Scotland.

[3] Most quality standards apply either to services for both adults and young people, or adults only. A handful of quality standards only apply to young people in schools (e.g. the Quality in Careers Standards in England).

[4] When relevant, they can alternatively be certified by the National Disability Standards for Disability Services.

4 Governance and funding

Responsibilities for adult career guidance are shared among multiple ministries, levels of government and social partners. Strong coordination mechanisms can facilitate seamless and high-quality service delivery, reduce duplication and prevent gaps in provision. This chapter provides an overview of how OECD countries promote coordination across the many actors involved in adult career guidance. It also discusses how funding of career guidance is shared between governments, adults and employers, and provides examples of policies to reduce the cost of career guidance for those who cannot afford to pay.

In Brief

Towards a well-coordinated and well-funded system of adult career guidance

Adult career guidance is governed by multiple ministries and levels of government. Effective coordination mechanisms can improve the quality of career guidance services and reduce duplication of effort. Given that career guidance has both public and private benefits, some cost-sharing between government, adults and employers is desirable. The main findings from this chapter are:

- The three national bodies most commonly responsible for adult career guidance are the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the public employment service. To promote horizontal cooperation, countries employ formal mechanisms like advisory groups or legislation, or assign the responsibility for coordination to dedicated bodies. Informal approaches are also used, including working groups or ad-hoc cooperation on a particular aspect of career guidance (e.g. the development of online services or quality standards).
- Responsibilities for adult career guidance are often shared across national, regional and local levels of government. National legislation, strategies and guidelines provide leadership on how adult career guidance is governed. 19 out of 21 countries surveyed reported that they had some kind of strategic document around career guidance. The majority of these strategies were embedded in wider skill or employment strategies. Other mechanisms for promoting vertical cooperation include national symposia, working groups and informal information sharing.
- Social partners are often involved in the governance of adult career guidance through working groups or permanent advisory bodies. Professional associations are also involved in various ways, including supporting the professional development of career guidance advisors, and engaging with government.
- Only one in four adults (26%) bear the cost of career guidance services themselves. The majority (74%) of adults who use career guidance services do not pay for them (either partially or fully). Consistent with this, cost does not represent a significant barrier to accessing career guidance services. Only 4% of non-users said cost was a barrier. The unemployed and those outside of the labour force can generally access free guidance through the public employment service and adults enrolled in education also have access to free guidance. Employed adults who are not in education are generally expected to contribute to the cost of career guidance, but vouchers and other subsidies are available in some OECD countries to reduce this cost, and sometimes their employer provides free guidance.
- Most career guidance services are funded partially or fully by governments, though international data on public spending are limited. Career guidance is often grouped together with general spending on education and training or public employment services.
- Employers tend to provide free career guidance for certain employees in certain contexts. They may provide internal career support for key talent groups in order to promote productivity and employee retention, and they may provide outplacement services to laid off workers in order to meet legal requirements. Making career guidance an allowable expenditure under training levies intended for education and training, or providing public subsidies to employers who offer impartial career guidance are possible ways to encourage cost sharing by employers.

Introduction

Responsibilities for adult career guidance are shared across ministries and levels of government, as well as social partners and other stakeholders. Coordination mechanisms can facilitate seamless and high-quality service delivery, reduce duplication and prevent gaps in provision.

Career guidance has both private and public benefits. As such, a combination of government subsidies, employer contributions, and individuals paying according to their means is generally viewed as a sustainable funding model.

Section 4.1 of this chapter examines how OECD countries coordinate career guidance horizontally across ministries; vertically between levels of government; and between government and other stakeholders. Section 4.2 looks at the role of career guidance strategies at promoting coordination. Section 4.3 discusses how the cost of career guidance is shared between governments, adults and employers. Section 4.4 provides examples of policy options used by OECD countries to defray the cost of career guidance for those who most need it, and to encourage cost sharing.

4.1. How is adult career guidance governed?

With responsibility for career guidance split across ministries and levels of government, strong coordination is needed. This section describes both the formal and informal mechanisms used across OECD countries to facilitate such coordination horizontally across ministries and vertically between levels of government. It also discusses the involvement of other stakeholders outside of government, including the social partners and professional associations.

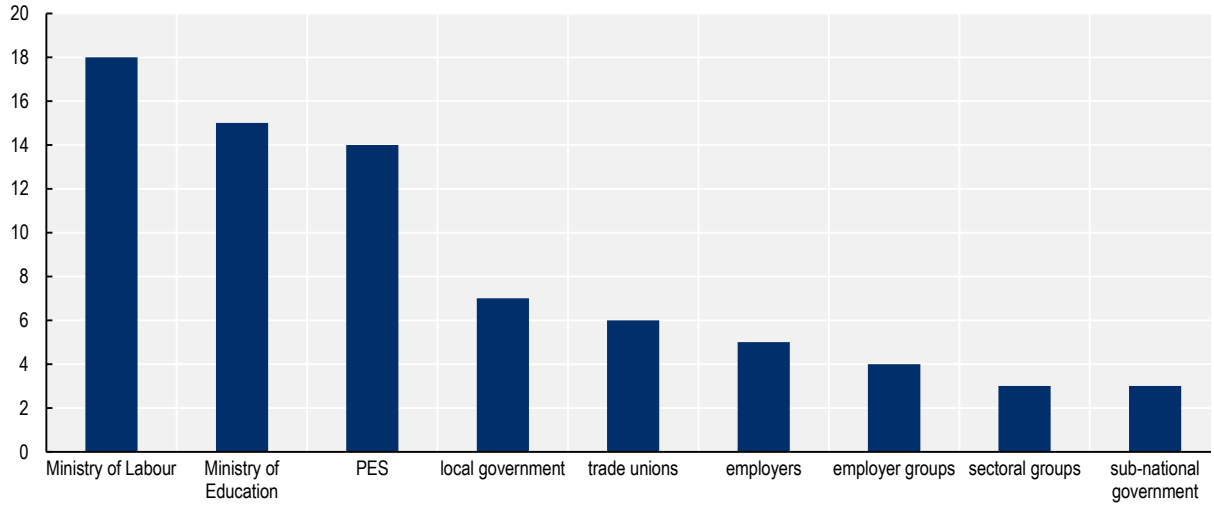
4.1.1. Horizontal coordination between ministries

Career guidance for adults sits at the intersection of employment and education policy, and is therefore not always the responsibility of one single ministry. It differs in this way from career guidance for young people, which generally falls to the Ministry of Education. This can raise challenges for ensuring a seamless coordination of the delivery of career guidance across Ministries and preventing duplication or gaps in provision.

The three most common bodies responsible for adult career guidance are the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the public employment service (PES) (Figure 4.1). The Ministry of Labour and the PES have jurisdiction over guidance helping unemployed or at-risk adults to find work or improve their employability. The Ministry of Education oversees education guidance that relates to selecting formal adult learning opportunities (e.g. basic skills training, second chance programmes and university courses for adults).

Figure 4.1. Bodies involved in governance of adult career guidance

Number of countries that say a given body is responsible for adult career guidance



Note: 21 countries responded to the question, "Which actors are responsible for the development of career guidance policy in your country?"
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

With distinct objectives and budgets, coordination between ministries of education and labour can be challenging. In federal systems, coordination between education and labour ministries is further complicated by the division of responsibility across levels of government. For instance, in **Germany**, the federal states have responsibility for guidance in education, while employment and vocational guidance is governed at the central level by the PES.

Career guidance touches other policy domains beyond education and employment, and other ministries may be involved as well, including those relating to immigration, innovation and health. Immigrants meet with career guidance advisors who support their integration into the labour market. To the extent that it encourages upskilling and retraining, career guidance can be a component of innovation policy. In some countries, it also factors into health policy given its social and psychological benefits.

Good coordination between ministries involved in career guidance reduces duplication, strengthens the overall quality of provision, and avoids gaps in provision.

Some OECD countries have adopted formal mechanisms for inter-ministerial cooperation, such as permanent advisory bodies. Inter-ministerial advisory bodies often set aside budgets at the national level for coordination. The **Czech Republic**'s National Guidance Forum (NGF) is an advisory body established in 2010 by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. Through working groups and project partnerships, the NGF promotes inter-ministerial coordination on the quality of lifelong guidance services, as well as other lifelong guidance activities and project plans. In a similar vein, **Germany**'s National Forum for Educational, Vocational and Employment-oriented Guidance (*Nationales Forum Beratung, Beruf, und Beschaftigung*) provides a national platform for exchange, cooperation and quality development. In **Ireland**, the biannual National Forum on Guidance supports collaboration and co-operation across the guidance sectors (schools, further education and training, social welfare / public employment services, higher education and professional bodies). The Forum is organised by the National Centre for Guidance in Ireland (Box 4.1). While the Forum supports cooperation, it is voluntary and cannot mandate any change in practice.

In some countries, dedicated bodies are assigned the role of coordinating career guidance. Sometimes these bodies have a wider mandate of coordinating skill and training policies, and career guidance is one part of that mandate. Skills Norway and Skills Development Scotland are two examples (see Box 4.1), along with France Compétences. Other times the dedicated body has a sole mandate of coordinating career guidance. This is the case with Ireland's National Centre for Guidance in Education (Box 4.1), for example. Dedicated bodies bring leadership and momentum to coordination, and usually have a budget set aside for carrying out activities. Relative to ministries, they may be perceived as more impartial and thus have greater success engaging stakeholders and achieving consensus. For instance, **France** Compétences is a public body with a quadripartite structure that includes representatives from national government, regional government, trade unions and employer organisations. It consults with these stakeholders to monitor outcomes and improve quality assurance in career guidance, for instance, by establishing a competence framework for career guidance advisors.

Coordination between ministries and sectors is sometimes enforced by legislation. In **Finland**, cross-sectoral service delivery (PES, health and social services, schools) is required by legislation, and practitioners are expected to be involved in service delivery and coordinating networks (Cedefop, 2009[1]). The Finnish One-Stop Guidance Centres have successfully achieved horizontal policy integration, whereby a single point of access facilitates information and referral to the right service (European Commission, 2020[2]).

Other coordination mechanisms are less formal. Working groups are a nimble coordination mechanism, and can be erected and dismantled as needed. The National Lifelong Guidance working group in **Finland** is co-chaired by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (Cedefop, 2020[3]). It is responsible for updating and implementing Finland's cross-ministerial strategy for lifelong guidance which has several objectives, including making guidance accessible for all, strengthening competences of career guidance advisors, developing a quality assurance system, and supporting individual career management skills.

In some countries, there is inter-ministerial cooperation on a particular project or on a specific aspect of adult career guidance. In **Poland**, the Ministries of Education and Labour cooperate in the implementation of the European Commission's Euroguidance project, which aims to support professional and educational mobility of citizens and to develop vocational guidance in European countries. Poland's ministries of education and labour worked jointly to establish quality standards for career counselling and career information in schools and elsewhere (Cedefop, 2009[1]). In **Finland**, a separate cross-ministerial working group oversees the development of integrated online services for career guidance.

Box 4.1. Dedicated bodies responsible for coordinating adult career guidance

Ireland

Ireland's National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, with responsibility to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform national guidance policy. The centre works with key stakeholders to ensure the promotion of quality guidance. It provides guidelines, supports innovations, organises continuing professional development for career guidance advisors and carries out national surveys on guidance practice and needs. It also hosts the National Forum on Guidance and Euroguidance Ireland.

Norway

Skills Norway is the directorate for lifelong learning in Norway with a mandate from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The directorate is responsible for strengthening coordination and cooperation, widening access, and increasing the quality of lifelong guidance services. To strengthen

cross-sectoral cooperation, Skills Norway chairs a National Forum for Career Guidance that brings together a variety of stakeholders. At the initiative of Skills Norway, two new laws concerning access to career guidance services were recently adopted: the first gives county municipalities a duty to offer career guidance services to all citizens, and the second gives refugees a right to participate in career guidance. To strengthen the quality of services in all sectors, Skills Norway developed a national quality framework. The framework consists of four elements: competence standards for practitioners; a Career Management Skills framework to inspire practitioners to deliver better career learning; ethical guidelines; and tools to enable more systematic quality assurance at both service and policy levels. Skills Norway has also recently launched a national digital career guidance service.

Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national body responsible for skills policies. One of its mandates is to provide career services for all age groups. Career services are delivered in schools, in centres and online and are shaped by national strategies on guidance and the overall national skills policy. SDS promotes continuous professional development of career guidance advisors, collects national data to monitor the quality of services, and cooperates with a wide range of agencies and stakeholders in service provision. SDS monitors the development of skills intelligence to understand the current and future demand of skills across the country and makes these insights available to employers, career guidance advisors and individuals. It maintains up-to-date information on the full range of routes and pathways that can be taken into careers, including options for work-based learning. This information informs the development of their resources, such as workshop materials and online digital content. SDS also commissions research relating to skills and employability and uses the findings to inform policy and practice.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire 'Career Guidance for Adults'; European Commission (2020[2]), "Lifelong guidance policy and practice in the EU: trends, challenges and opportunities; https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/; https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/About-Skills-Norway; http://ncge.ie;

4.1.2. Vertical coordination between levels of government

Responsibilities for adult career guidance are often shared across levels of government, including national, regional and local levels (Figure 4.1). In centralised systems, the national government is responsible for both policy design and implementation. In more decentralised systems, the national government designs policies while the regional or local governments look after implementation. In federal systems, the national government defines broad policy objectives, while sub-national governments assume the bulk of responsibility for both policy design and implementation.

Each approach has strengths and weaknesses. Centralised systems have the advantage of clear leadership and accountability, but may suffer from poor alignment between national and local priorities, or a gap between national priorities and local implementation. Experimentation at the local level may also be stifled in a centralised system. More decentralised systems have the potential for improved alignment between policies and local needs. With their established networks to local employers and services – like recognition of prior learning and training provision – local governments can help to design effective career guidance policies adapted to local needs. But decentralised systems come with a greater risk of inequalities in provision, funding and quality of programmes across the country. Inefficiencies may also be greater due to poor coordination of effort.

In some countries, national legislation provides leadership on how adult career guidance should be implemented. In **Sweden**, career guidance policy is decentralised but nationally regulated by the School Act. The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket)* has established general guidelines on career education and guidance to ensure consistent implementation of the legislation. This model promotes

consistent quality in the delivery of services across the country, while allowing for innovative solutions at the local level. A similar model applies in **France**. The State and regions annually sign an agreement specifying how they will coordinate regional activities relating to employment and vocational guidance and training. In **Canada**, the federal government contributes to the funding of provincial and territorial skills training and employment services through bilateral labour market agreements. The provinces and territories then design and deliver programmes to meet the needs of their local labour markets.

Another approach pairs national strategies or guidelines with local implementation. In **Finland**, regional authorities support the design and implementation of career guidance services as well as quality assurance. They are responsible for ensuring that their services meet guidelines established by the National Lifelong Career Guidance working group (European Commission, 2020[2]). In **Chile**, the Ministry of Labour through the National Service of Skills and Work (*Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo*) are responsible for the design and monitoring of the country's career guidance strategy. Local government and municipal offices of labour integration (*Oficinas Municipales de Intermediación Laboral,* OMIL) take care of implementation.

Working groups or separate bodies are other ways to support vertical coordination. **Spain**'s Sectoral Conference on Employment and Labour Affairs supports coordination and cooperation between the national administration and the autonomous communities in matters of employment policy and vocational training for employment, including career guidance. In **Belgium**, central and territorial coordination of career guidance is facilitated by a steering committee. In **Canada**, the Future Skills Centre is a pan-Canadian independent innovation and applied research centre that prototypes, tests and evaluates innovative approaches to skills development and assessment. The Centre achieves this by funding innovation projects, some of which relate to career guidance. Evidence generated from these projects will be shared with federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as frontline service partners. The goal of sharing this evidence is to transform policy and programme design; successful approaches may be scaled up or piloted in other provinces.

Some coordination mechanisms are focused on information sharing. **Chile**'s Regional Directorates provide regular technical assistance to local level bodies responsible for career guidance. This regular two-way information sharing helps the central government better understand local needs in designing policies for career guidance. National symposia like the **UK**'s annual National Career Guidance Show have a similar purpose. They bring together policy makers and practitioners to document examples of good practice, and help central government better understand local needs.

4.1.3. Engaging stakeholders in setting career guidance policy

In many countries, social partners – both trade unions and employer groups – participate in working groups to review policies around career guidance for adults. In **Estonia**, a working group called "career guidance forum" is the main mechanism for coordinating career guidance services. Members include representatives from ministries, youth and student organisations, schools, the career counsellors association, and employers. Another working group focuses on adult education, with career guidance for adults as one of its focus areas. In **Denmark**, working groups made up of social partners and education institutions inform the development of online portals. Also in Denmark, the government meets every three years with the PES and employer groups to discuss how to support low-educated individuals in finding work, as well as how to support longer working lives (European Commission, 2020[2]).

Social partners can also influence government priority setting through permanent advisory bodies. **Spain**'s tripartite advisory body (General Council of the National Employment System) coordinates on employment policy and vocational training in the workplace. Membership includes representatives from the autonomous communities, the national government, business and trade unions. **Austria**'s lifelong guidance strategy was jointly developed by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), the public employment service (AMF) and social partners. The social partners also play an advisory role in the

steering group of the Austrian Initiative for Adult Education. The National Careers Council in **England** (United Kingdom) provides advice to the government on careers provision for young people and adults, and membership in the council is drawn from business, education, voluntary/community and careers sectors.

Employers and employer groups are often engaged by government to share labour market information and insights in the context of career guidance. In **Flanders**, private companies are encouraged to feed their vacancies to the public employment service, creating a single and transparent repository of CVs and vacancies.

In addition to the social partners, professional associations are an important stakeholder in the governance of career guidance in some countries. They support professional development and training of career guidance advisors; collect and share LMI; facilitate exchange of good practice; establish guidelines, ethics and standards; participate in fora; and engage government. The **Slovenian** Ministry of Education, Science and Sport created a national cross-sectoral professional group in 2011 to review existing practices in lifelong learning information and guidance and to make policy recommendations. Composed of experts and stakeholders, the group is also developing professional standards for career guidance advisors. The group has little power, however, to institute strategic changes to lifelong guidance policy.

4.2. What is the role of career guidance strategies?

A career guidance strategy is a national or regional stance on career guidance that sets out the vision, objectives and priorities for action. Ideally, it defines career guidance provision across different contexts, including who is responsible for delivering what, eligibility, quality mechanisms, and funding. A career guidance strategy provides leadership to all actors in the system, and helps to build policy coherence. It is often the product of a long process of consultations with many stakeholders. Nearly all countries that responded to the policy questionnaire have some type of policy document relating to career guidance, though not all meet the criteria for a career guidance strategy (Table 4.1).

For the most part, career guidance strategies are not stand-alone strategies, but are embedded in wider lifelong learning or employment strategies. Only a handful of countries have stand-alone career guidance strategies (Greece, Italy, Korea, Turkey). Career guidance is often viewed as crucial for the success of lifelong learning and employment strategies (OECD, 2017[4]; European Commission, 2020[2]). Indeed, guidance has been identified as necessary to the success of programmes to financially encourage adult learning, particularly in reaching lower-skilled adults (OECD, 2019[5]). While governments and employers can provide opportunities for adults to continue learning over their working lives, it is ultimately up to the individual to make decisions about what they learn. Whether countries achieve desired outcomes from lifelong learning strategies, like improved productivity and social well-being, depends on the quality of individual decisions. This makes effective career guidance a necessary component of successful lifelong learning strategies.

With a dedicated source of funding, career guidance strategies are more likely to succeed. As part of their tripartite agreement, the **Danish** Government and social partners set aside over DKK 400 million towards upskilling both unskilled and skilled workers. Part of this budget is allocated to career guidance activities, including outreach, screenings, and recognition of prior learning.

Quantitative targets in career guidance strategies establish an objective metric for assessing performance, and can be either outcome or process focused. Outcome targets often relate to adult learning or labour market participation. In **Slovenia**, for instance, one of the targets of the adult learning strategy that includes career guidance services is to raise the share of adults who participate in formal and non-formal education to the EU average. Targets can also focus on process, or the way in which services are delivered. As part of the career

guidance strategy in **Flanders** (Belgium) that integrates job search services with career services, the VDAB aims to interview new unemployed adults within the first 3 months after they register for unemployment.

Rigorous monitoring of career guidance strategies enables countries to assess their performance against qualitative or quantitative targets and to make course corrections as needed. In **Ireland**, the National Centre for Guidance in Education provides annual reports to the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS, the state agency responsible for further education and training. The reports monitor progress towards meeting objectives set out in the Further Education and Training Strategy, including building an integrated and impartial career guidance service. The reports track various indicators: the number of beneficiaries, the share of beneficiaries who progress to employment or further training, and participation by target group (e.g. disadvantaged men/women, lone parents, long-term unemployed). An independent review of these reports resulted in recommendations that will form the basis of the subsequent strategy.

Table 4.1. Examples of career guidance strategies, OECD countries

	Does a strategy exist ?				Components of the strategy				Name of the strategy	
	Yes, stand-alone	Yes, part of a wider strategy	No	Targets certain groups	Contains quantitative targets	Sets deadlines	Has dedicated funding	Is monitored		Year introduced
Australia		x		x	x		x	x	National Careers Institute (NCI), builds on the National Career Education Strategy	2019
Austria		x			x		x	x	Austrian Initiative for Adult Education	2011
Belgium (Flanders)		x		x	x	x	x	x	VDAB voucher programme	2001
Chile		x		x	x	x	x	x	SENCE programmes	2018
Czech Republic		x							Employment policy strategy until 2020 (to be replaced by Strategic framework for employment policy until 2030)	2014
Denmark		x		x	x	x	x	x	Tripartite agreement on strengthened and more flexible adult, continuing and further education	2017
Estonia		x		x	x		x	x	National Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023; National Education strategy 2021-2035	2019
France		x			x	x	x	x	*Le conseil en évolution professionnelle* (also part of wider employment and skills strategies)	2014
Greece	x			x	x			x	Integrated Career Orientation/Reorientation Programme	1971
Ireland		x		x	x		x	x	Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019	2012
Italy	x								National guidelines for lifelong guidance	2013
Japan		x		x	x	x			10 National Skills Development Strategy	2016
Korea	x			x				x	Comprehensive employment support programme providing tailored counselling services	2009
Lithuania			x						/	
Mexico		x		x					/	
Netherlands		x		x	x	x	x	x	Inter-ministerial action programme on lifelong learning	2018
Poland		x		x	x	x	x	x	The National Action Plan for Employment (KPDZ)	2020
Portugal		x		x					Adult learning strategy for the low qualified adult population	2016
Slovenia		x		x	x	x	x	x	Adult Education Act 2018, Adult Learning Master Plan 2013-2020, 2020 PES development strategy	
Spain		x			x	x	x	x	Spanish Strategy for Employment Activation 2017-2020	2017
Sweden			x						STOM – *Stöd och Matchning* (Support and Matching)	2014
Turkey	x				x			x	ISKUR job and vocational counselling programme	2010

Note: / indicates that the name of the strategy was not provided.
Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

4.3. How is career guidance for adults funded?

How should the cost of career guidance be shared between governments, adults and employers? Who should pay is largely a question of who benefits and who can afford to pay. Adults are a direct beneficiary of career guidance, as it supports their progression in learning and work. If career guidance were seen purely as an individual private good, then it could be argued that adults should pay for it themselves. However, career guidance yields public benefits. It supports the effective functioning of labour and learning markets, and contributes to a range of social equity goals. Employers also benefit. Providing career development opportunities to their employees yields higher employee engagement and retention, skills development, and improved skill matches within their company.

Availability of cross-country data on funding of adult career guidance is limited for several reasons. Aggregating the expenditures of the many different public actors who contribute is challenging. Career guidance rarely has its own budget category and tends to be grouped together with overall spending on education and training or public employment services. Consistency in how career guidance services are defined is often lacking. Systematic efforts to collect information on public spending on adult career guidance have therefore not yet been conducted at the international level.

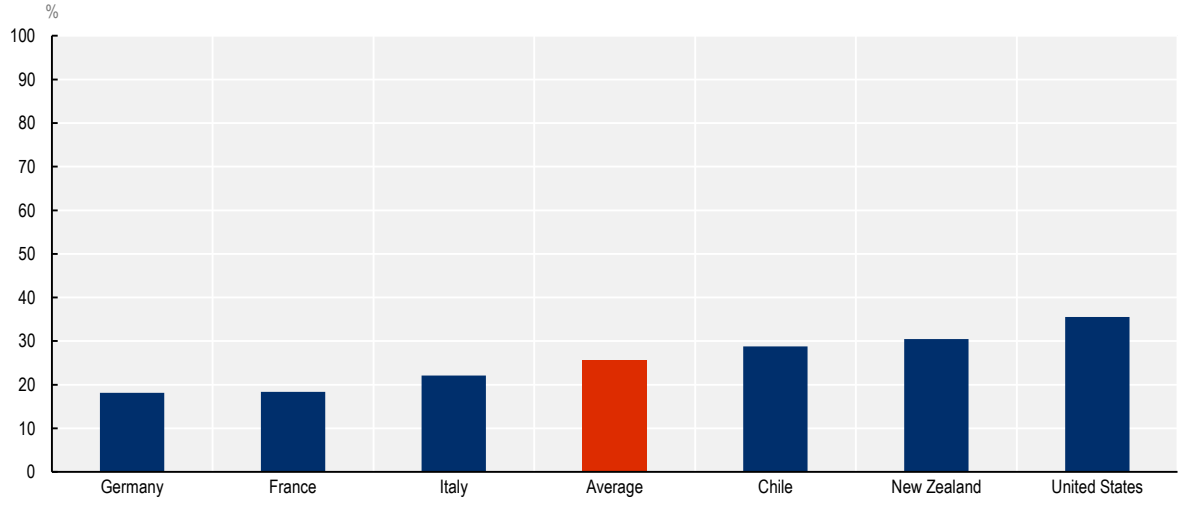
4.3.1. Adults' out-of-pocket spending

Adults are the direct beneficiaries of career guidance services. They stand to progress faster in their learning and work as they become more informed about options available to them. They also experience psychological and learning benefits, including stronger self-esteem, more clarity about their future direction, and improved career management skills.

Despite the direct benefits to adults, available evidence suggests that users do not usually pay out of pocket for the service. Based on survey evidence from the SCGA, the majority (74%) of adults who use career guidance services do not pay for them. Only 26% of users report having paid fully or partially for the career guidance services they received (Figure 4.2). Adults in European countries (Germany, France and Italy) were least likely to pay, compared with those in non-European countries (Chile, New Zealand and the United States). This difference can be explained by the higher use of PES-provided career guidance services in European countries (Chapter 2), as PES-provided services are usually provided at no cost.

Figure 4.2. Adults' financial contribution to career guidance

Percentage of adult career guidance users who paid (partially or fully) for services



Note: The average includes six OECD countries: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Furthermore, cost does not represent a significant barrier to accessing career guidance services. Among adults who did not use career guidance in the past five years, only 4% said the service was too costly (Chapter 1). Non-users were much more likely to cite reasons other than cost for not accessing career guidance, such as not feeling like they needed it (57%) or not knowing that the service existed (20%).

Cost is a factor in selecting a provider; however, it is not the most important factor. As discussed in Chapter 2, many adults do not have a choice about which provider they choose: either they are required to go to a particular provider (23%), perhaps as directed by the PES; or they are not aware of any other provider (22%). When they do have a choice, 14% of adult users of career guidance selected a given provider because it was the cheapest. But other factors are more important than cost, including proximity to place of residence (22%), and having a recommendation from a friend or family member (16%).

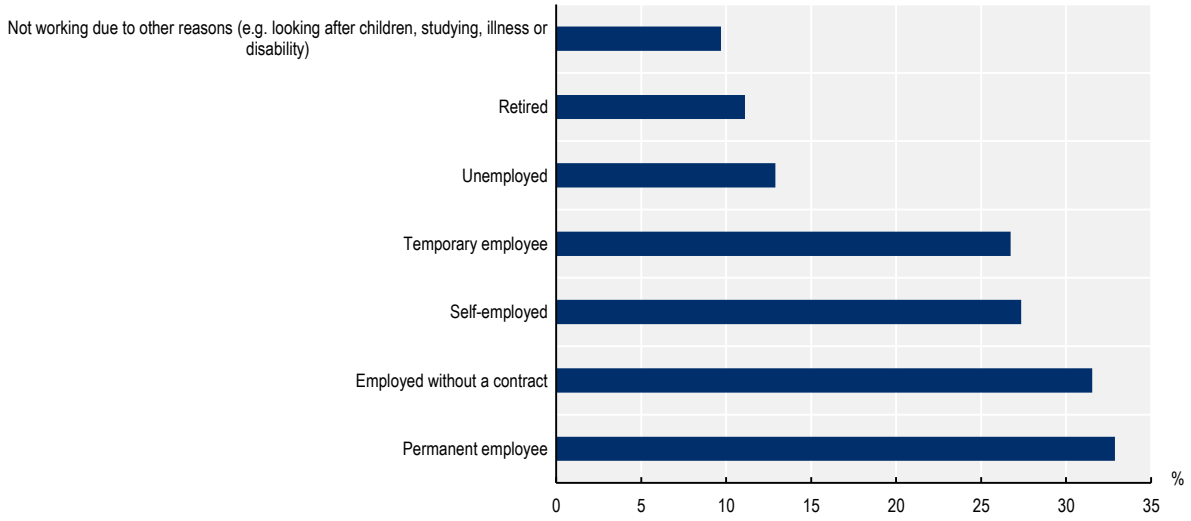
Career guidance is free in certain contexts. Across OECD countries, career guidance services are generally free for the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment through the PES. In some countries, employed adults can also access free career guidance through the PES. Guidance is often free for those enrolled in education or for recent graduates. Adults who are employed and out of school must generally contribute to the cost of career guidance from private providers. Employers sometimes provide career guidance for their employees, but only under a narrow set of circumstances, i.e. when they are members of key talent groups or as part of outplacement services.

According to the SCGA, permanent employees are the group most likely to contribute out-of-pocket to the cost of career guidance, followed by employees without a contract, the self-employed and temporary employees (Figure 4.3). Adults are most likely to pay for career guidance services from either a private provider or from an employer group (Figure 4.4). Adults outside of the labour force and the unemployed are least likely to contribute out-of-pocket. This makes sense given the substantial public benefit to these groups receiving career guidance, and possibly re-entering employment.

The section below on policy options discusses the use of vouchers and other subsidies to reduce the out-of-pocket cost for adults, particularly those with lower ability to pay.

Figure 4.3. Adults' financial contribution to career guidance, by employment status

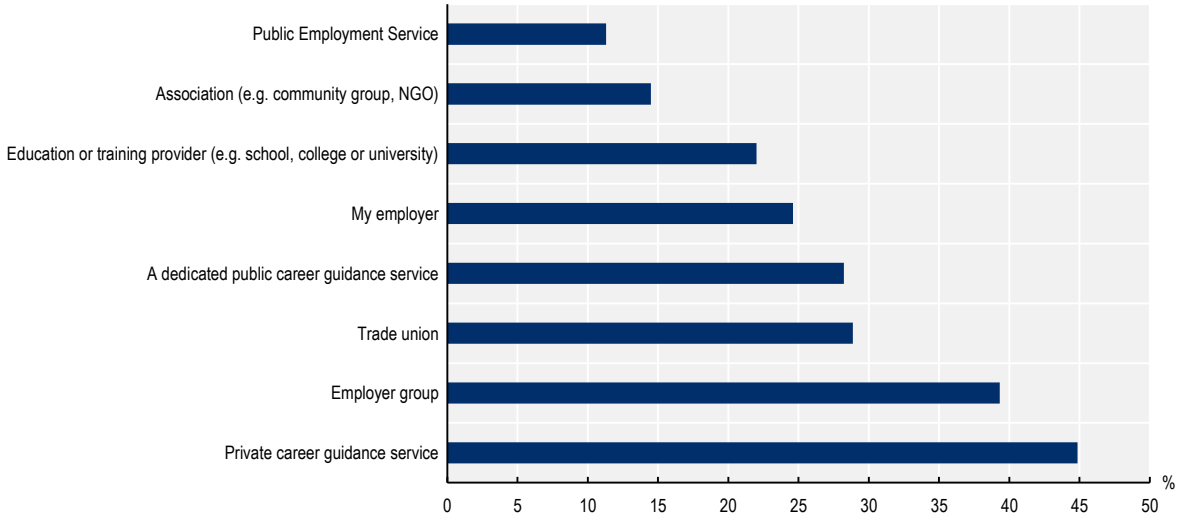
Percentage of adult career guidance users who paid (partially or fully) for services, by employment status



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

Figure 4.4. Adults' financial contribution to career guidance, by provider

Percentage of adult career guidance users who paid (partially or fully) for services, by provider



Note: Average for the six countries covered by the SCGA: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. Data refer to the last time the respondent spoke to a career guidance advisor.
Source: OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA).

4.3.2. Government contribution to funding

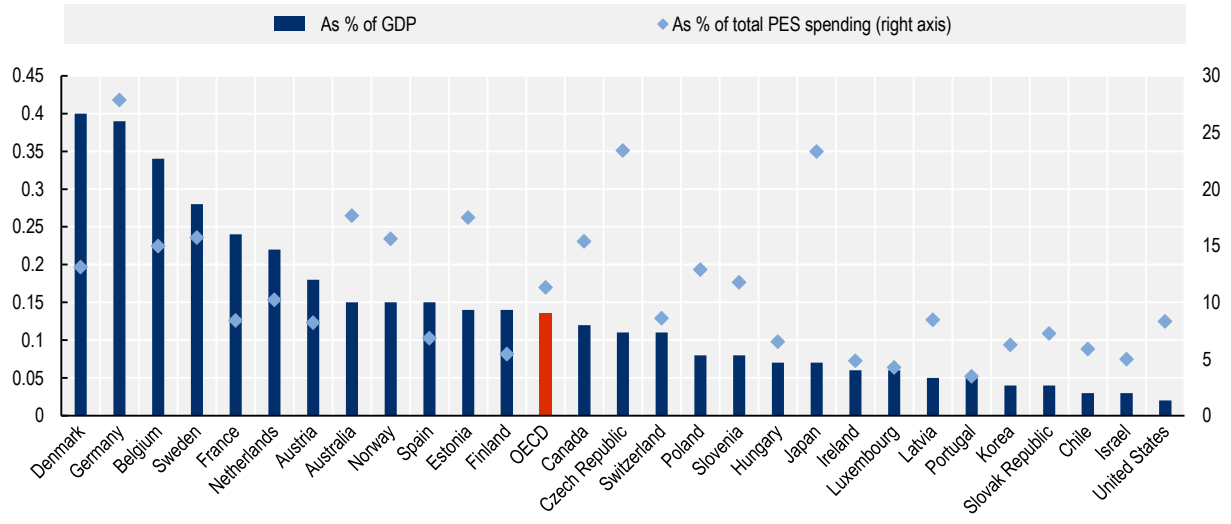
Most career guidance services are funded partially or fully by governments, whether at national, regional or local level. Public spending on career guidance is justified on the basis that it provides public benefits

as well as private benefits. Watts (2008[6]) identifies three public goals that career guidance helps to achieve: learning, labour market and social equity goals. If individuals make well-informed decisions, the large public investments in education and training are likely to yield higher returns. An important caveat, as identified by an evaluation of an education guidance pilot in Europe (Carpentieri et al., 2018[7]), is that publicly funded education guidance is only a good investment if funding is also available for adult education. Labour market goals are achieved by improving the match between the demand and supply of labour. Finally, career guidance can advance social equity goals by raising the career aspirations of disadvantaged individuals and supporting them in accessing employment and education opportunities that otherwise may have been denied to them.

As previously noted, international data on public spending on career guidance are limited. The only source of cross-country data is PES expenditure, and this is only an approximation. Average OECD expenditure on public employment services and administration is 0.15% of GDP, and ranges from 0.02% in the United States to 0.4% of GDP in Denmark (Figure 4.5). These estimates include services related to career guidance, such as counselling, information services and referrals to opportunities for work. But they also include other expenses not directly related to career guidance, including financial assistance to help with the cost of job search and mobility to take up work.

Figure 4.5. Government spending on public employment services and administration, 2017 or latest available year

As percentage of GDP (left-side axis) and as percentage of total PES spending (right-side axis)



Note: Government spending on career guidance is approximated by "Public Employment Services and administration", which includes placement and related services, benefit administration and other services. Placement and related services include open information services, referral to opportunities for work, training and other forms of assistance, counselling and case management of jobseekers, financial assistance with the costs of job search or mobility to take up work, and job brokerage and related services for employers, if spending on these functions can be separately identified. Services provided by the main public employment service and by other publicly funded bodies are included.
Source: OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics.

Moreover, since career guidance is only one of many services offered by the PES, only a portion of public resources spent on the PES are devoted to career guidance. The size of PES administration spending relative to total PES spending (including activities like training, employment incentives, out-of-work income support) varies across countries. It accounts for 11.3% of total PES spending in OECD countries on average, and ranges from 3.5% in Portugal to 27.9% in Germany (Figure 4.5).

International data on public spending on career guidance by educational institutions is also limited. Educational institutions often provide free career guidance for current students or recent graduates. Public spending on career guidance in education institutions tends to be grouped together with overall spending on education and training. As a result, cross-country data that captures public spending on career guidance in educational institutions is not available.

Despite the lack of international data, some idea of the size of public subsidies can be gleaned from national sources. In **France**, the government subsidises the full cost of a "skills assessment" (*bilan de compétences*) when an individual uses it to mobilise their training rights as part of their individual training account (*compte personnel de formation,* CPF). Career guidance services are provided as part of the skills assessment, which costs EUR 1 460 on average.[1]

4.3.3. Employers' contribution to funding

Employers can also benefit from the provision of career guidance to their employees, which would explain their willingness to contribute to its funding. The process of career support used within organisations is usually referred to as "career development" or "career management" rather than career guidance.[2] When they provide career development opportunities to their staff, employers stand to benefit from higher employee engagement and retention, skills development, and improved skill matches as employees move to where their skills are most needed within the company (Cedefop, 2008[8]).

Research from Cedefop (2008[8]) found that European employers pay for certain types of within-firm career support. They frequently pay for coaching, assessment and development support for individuals from key talent groups, such as senior managers or recent graduates. They also regularly pay for employees to access advice and support on learning and development activities. When laying off employees, they also fund outplacement services as part of severance packages to respect employment legislation. Outplacement services are external career guidance services to help the employee find new employment quickly. Generally, employers do not provide impartial career guidance – defined as advice on opportunities to advance in an individual's career both inside and outside their current place of employment – unless there is a clear incentive.

Unfortunately, there is no international data on employers' spending on career development and guidance. Spending on career development is often grouped together with training as part of a firm's "learning and development" budget.

There may not be a strong rationale for employers to contribute to the cost of external, impartial career guidance. On the one hand, adults who are more informed about their unique skill set and aspirations can find better skill matches on the labour market, thus lowering costly skills mismatches. Employers benefit from having access to a well-informed workforce who seek out jobs that match well with their skills and aspirations. On the other hand, the departure of a productive employee following impartial career guidance can be costly for an employer.

4.4. Which policies can support adequate funding and cost-sharing?

The 2004 OECD study on career guidance and public policy advocated for a mixed funding approach, whereby services for young people and unemployed adults are free, and services for employed adults are charged (OECD, 2004[9]). This approach seems to have been adopted by several countries, including those countries covered by the SCGA (Figure 4.3). However, not all employed adults have an equal ability to pay for career guidance. Furthermore, there are important social equity reasons to subsidise the cost of career guidance for employed workers whose jobs are at risk of automation, for adults in non-standard working arrangements who may have less access to career guidance and training opportunities, or for low-skilled adults who require upskilling or retraining to remain employable.

In countries that enshrine the right to career guidance in legislation, public funding often follows. In a 2017 OECD policy questionnaire, 19 countries/regions answered the question about whether a legal right to counselling existed in their country (OECD, 2017[4]). Nine said that such a right existed and that it was universal (Belgium [Flemish and German-speaking communities], Estonia, France, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal), four had a legal right that was restricted to certain groups (Belgium [Wallonia], Greece, Hungary and Sweden), and five had no such legal right (Austria, Norway, Japan, the Czech Republic and Italy). **Norway** has since adopted new legislation. By law, county municipalities must offer career guidance services to all citizens living in the county, and refugees now have a duty and a right to participate in career guidance when attending an introduction programme.

Free career guidance is available for employed adults in some countries on the basis of contracts between the government and providers. In **France**, the *Conseil en évolution professionnelle* (CEP) gives workers and jobseekers the right to free and impartial information, advice and guidance throughout their working lives. In **Austria**, free educational guidance for adults is offered in each of the nine federal provinces within the framework of the regional networks for educational and vocational guidance.

Individual vouchers for career guidance help to reduce the cost for adults, while also encouraging them to share in the cost. This type of quasi-market approach may also promote the growth of private markets. In **Flanders** (Belgium), for example, a career guidance voucher allows workers to buy EUR 250 worth of career guidance with a registered provider every year. The adult is responsible for paying half the cost of the service. A potential disadvantage with the voucher system is that forecasting public budgets is not straightforward. Once a price is set for the voucher, the total public cost depends on demand, which can be hard to anticipate. Box 4.2 provides examples of career guidance vouchers.

Another approach is to make career guidance an allowable expenditure under financial incentives geared towards lifelong learning. For instance, **Greece** and **Germany** offer vouchers that can be used towards either training programmes or guidance sessions. In **France**, the *bilan des compétences* (Skills Assessment) is an allowable expenditure under the *compte personnel de formation* (CPF, Individual Training Account). Since the CPF is funded by an employer levy on medium and large-sized firms (OECD, 2019[5]), this is also an effective way to have employers share in the cost of guidance. When an employee uses the CPF for a skills assessment conducted outside of working hours, they do not need to inform their employer.

Some countries target subsidies for career guidance at vulnerable groups of employed workers. The **Netherlands** experimented with providing a temporary subsidy for personal career guidance to persons aged 45+ who work at least 12 hours per week (*Ontwikkeladvies*). The pilot is now being evaluated. Similarly, **Australia** introduced the Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers programme in 2018, which provides free career guidance for adults aged 45-70 who are employed and at risk of entering the income support system or who have recently become unemployed. In **Korea,** career guidance for low-income employed adults (earning less than 60% of the median income) is publicly subsidised.

Governments can provide subsidies to encourage employers to provide career guidance opportunities to their employees. Until 2018 in **Japan**, employers who introduced the self-career dock system could receive a government subsidy to provide both individual and group counselling (OECD, 2021[10]).

Opportunity costs for career guidance tend to be low, and public funding to compensate for the time away from work is uncommon. Speaking with a career guidance advisor requires a considerably smaller time investment than completing a training programme – generally a couple of hours versus 30 or more hours for training.[3] Whereas not having enough time was the single most important barrier cited by adults who did not train (43% of adults, OECD (2019[11])),[4] only 11% of non-users report time constraints as the reason they did not consult a career guidance advisor. Paid leave to visit a career guidance advisor is rare. However, a few countries allow workers to apply paid leave for education and training purposes towards career guidance visits (Box 4.3).

With responsibilities for adult career guidance split between ministries of education and labour and levels of government, effective cost-sharing models are needed. In the **United States**, the central government provides funding to state governments to operate PES according to an established formula based on the state's relative share of unemployment. Some programmes require collaboration and/or cost-sharing with local agencies to secure central funding.

To reduce overall funding costs for government, many countries have adopted a delivery model that takes advantage of technology. For those with digital skills, online career resources can enable self-help, thereby freeing up resources to provide assistance to those who most need it. Online provision of career guidance services is discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Box 4.2. Career guidance vouchers

Flanders

Flanders (Belgium) offers training vouchers for employees working in Flanders or Brussels, which can also be used for career guidance sessions. An individual can purchase up to EUR 250 in training vouchers per calendar year, and the Flemish Government funds half of it. In certain cases, additional financial support can be requested. To be eligible for a voucher, an employee must have worked a minimum number of hours with a given employer.

Germany

The German Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) certifies that a job seeker or an unemployed person meets the eligibility requirements for activation and occupational integration measures by granting him or her an "activation and placement voucher" (*Aktivierungs- und Vermittlungsgutschein*). The placement officer defines the objective of the voucher and attaches a funding commitment. The job seeker can then choose between guidance counselling and training courses and use the voucher to pay the provider directly.

Greece

With a mandate from the Greek Ministry of Labour, the Greek Manpower Organization (OAED) offers young people (including young adults, aged 15-29) vouchers, which can be exchanged for training programmes for work or for specialised career guidance programmes to support transition to the labour market. These vouchers are part of a broad range of support from the state, including job subsidies for employers, professional experience opportunities for unemployed young people and entrepreneurship programs.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults', www.arbeitsagentur.de/aktivierungs-vermittlungsgutschein-avgs.

Box 4.3. Leave provisions for guidance

Denmark

When completing an Individual Competence Assessment (IKV), low skilled and middle-skilled participants aged 18-65 are entitled to a fixed allowance funded by the state, as part of the State Grant System for Adult Training (*VEU-godtgørelse*). VEU also funds training leave. Learners may use training leave to consult guidance services relating to their education and training. Only the funding arrangements are regulated by law; the social partners may regulate all other issues concerning training leave through collective agreements.

Netherlands

No specific provisions regarding the right to training leave are present in national legislation in the Netherlands. Instead, training has been understood primarily as a responsibility of the social partners. Many large companies have social agreements (CAO) with career guidance facilities that allow workers to have time off work to consult career guidance advisors. However, significant differences in the regulation of training leave exist between sectors.

Source: OECD 2020 Policy Questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'.

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Watts, A. (2008), "Career Guidance and Public Policy", in *International Handbook of Career Guidance*. [6]

Notes

[1] "Mon compte formation: un bilan positif un an après le lancement, Les Echos (http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-france/), 18 November 2020.

[2] The terms "career guidance" or "career advice" is rarely used by HR professionals or line managers to describe the process of career support used within organisations. They are much more likely to use the terms "career support" and "career development" to describe these processes (Cedefop, 2008[8]).

[3] On average, adult learners take part in 30.5 hours of non-formal learning per year (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC). See Figure 2.4 in OECD (2019[11]).

[4] Among those adults who wanted to participate in adult learning but did not, 28% reported a shortage of time due to work responsibilities, and 15% reported a shortage of time due to family responsibilities (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC). In total, 43% of non-participants reported lack of time as the reason they did not train.

Annex A. Responses to the policy questionnaire

Table A A.1. OECD countries that responded to the 2020 OECD policy questionnaire, 'Career Guidance for Adults'

	Ministry of Labour	Ministry of Education	PES	Local government	Not answered
Australia		x			
Austria			x		
Belgium			x	x	
Canada	x				
Chile	x				
Colombia					x
Czech Republic	x	x			
Denmark		x			
Estonia			x		
Finland					x
France	x				
Germany					x
Greece	x	x			
Hungary					x
Iceland					x
Ireland		x			
Israel					x
Italy	x				
Japan	x				
Korea	x				
Latvia					x
Lithuania	x	x	x		
Luxembourg					x
Mexico	x				
Netherlands		x			
New Zealand					x
Norway					x
Poland	x				
Portugal			x		
Slovak Republic					x
Slovenia		x			
Spain			x		
Sweden		x	x		
Switzerland					x
Turkey			x		
United Kingdom					x
United States		x			

Annex B. Methodology note on the Survey of Career Guidance for Adults

This report uses data collected in the 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA). The SCGA was conducted to better understand adults' experience with career guidance services and to improve international data on coverage.

Fieldwork was conducted by Cint[1] using an online survey developed by the OECD. It took place from mid-June to early July 2020 in six countries: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States.[2] The sample was restricted to adults aged 25-64, in order to target those who had left initial education.

The survey was prepared in five languages (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) and distributed in the country's official language. Cint disseminated the online survey to a "pre-approved" panel of registered users using a stratified sample methodology, which imposed quotas on age, gender and region. This means that Cint drew a sub-sample from its panel that is representative of each country's population in terms of age, gender and region. The age and gender quotas were based on UN World Population Prospects statistics (https://population.un.org/wpp/), while the region quotas were based on Cint's data.

After data collection, two quality checks were applied. First, if a respondent completed the survey in two minutes or less, the respondent was excluded. This is based on the assumption that the survey takes more than two minutes to complete with appropriate consideration. Second, if a respondent did not answer the final question of the survey, they were also excluded. This was to ensure that only respondents who completed the full survey were captured in the final dataset.

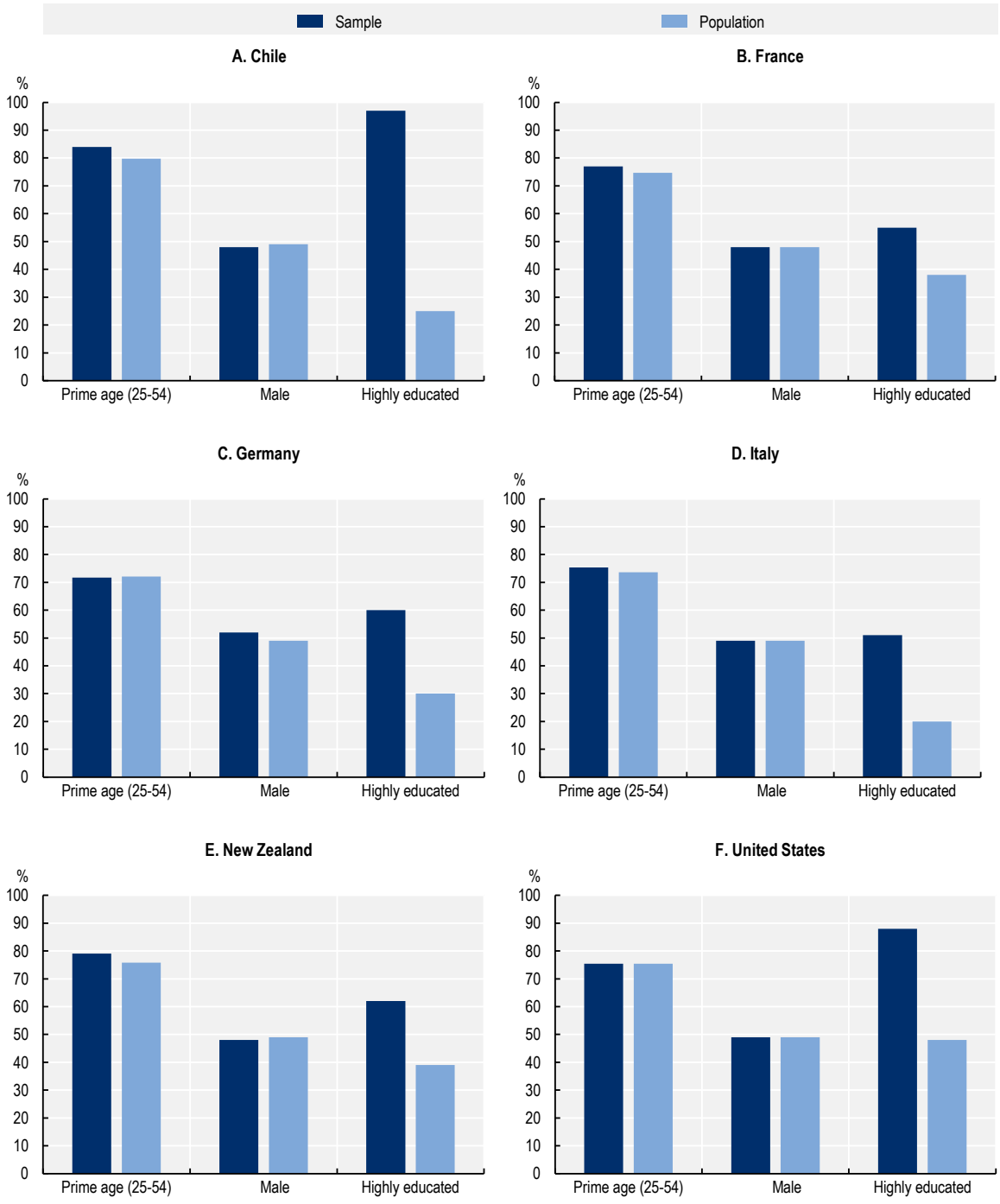
To ensure adequate sample sizes and comparability, the data collection aimed at 1 000 observations per country. Table A B.1 shows the final sample sizes by country, after sample restrictions, quotas and the quality checks had been applied.

Table A B.1. Final sample size by country

	Sample size
Chile	960
France	922
Germany	922
Italy	980
New Zealand	905
United States	922

Online surveys tend to under-represent the behaviour of people who are not online. These are generally older adults with less formal education. Figure A B.1 compares the composition of the country-level samples by age, gender and education with the composition of the actual population in those countries. Thanks to quotas, the sample is very close to the actual population on age and gender. However, the SCGA oversamples adults with higher levels of education. To understand the impact of this oversampling, Annex C presents a sensitivity analysis.

Figure A B.1. Sample composition by age, gender and education group, compared to actual population



Note: "Highly educated" refers to the share of the population with a tertiary education (ISCED 4-6). The other education groups not shown here are below upper secondary education (ISCED 0-2), and upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3).
Source: The sample composition by age, gender and education is drawn from the Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA). The population distribution of age and gender were extracted from UN 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects (https://population.un.org/wpp/). For population estimates by education group, *OECD Education at a Glance 2020* was used.

Notes

[1] Cint is a digital insights gathering platform (https://www.cint.com/). The Cint platform and products comply with standards and certifications set out by various market research associations including ESOMAR, MRS, ARF, MRIA, AMA, AMSRO and Insights Association and ISO 20252 quality standards.

[2] The online survey was conducted in June-July 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis. One implication of this is that more people were able to respond to the survey because they were confined at home, were teleworking, and/or because they lost their job and had more time available. Cint noted that response rates were higher than expected as a result. Any impact this might have had on sample composition, however, was mitigated by the use of quotas on age, gender and region.

Countries were also at different stages of the pandemic when the survey was conducted. It is possible that policy measures adopted in different countries to cope with COVID-19 could have indirectly influenced the use of career guidance services. For instance, those countries that were more heavily affected by the pandemic at the time of the survey may have had more people out of work or at risk of losing their job as a result of the policy measures that were adopted (e.g. temporary business closures, travel restrictions). This could have affected the share of people who used career guidance services.

Annex C. Sensitivity analysis

Highly educated adults are over-represented in the OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA). The average share of highly-educated adults (defined as ISCED 4-6) is 68% in SCGA, which is nearly twice higher than the average share of highly educated in the population (35% on average across the six countries in the survey). This is because low-educated people tend to participate less in online surveys than those with a higher level of education (Van der Heyden et al., 2017[1]).

Table A C.1 shows results from a simple sensitivity analysis where the use of career guidance within each education group is held fixed, while the share of adults in each education group is adjusted to match the population. A weighted average is computed, multiplying the share of adults in each education group by their use of career guidance, then summing up across all education groups. The results of the sensitivity analysis show that, all other things being equal, if the education composition in the sample matched the actual education composition in the population, the share of adults who used career guidance in the last five years would be 40%. This is indeed slightly lower than the measured usage of career guidance (43%) in the sample. But it suggests that over-representation of highly educated adults does not have a large impact on the accuracy of the overall findings.

Table A C.1. Sensitivity analysis

	Share in the sample	Share in the population	Use of career guidance
Education			
High (ISCED 4-6)	68%	35%	48%
Middle (ISCED 3)	25%	43%	38%
Low (ISCED 1-2)	7%	23%	32%
Share of adults age 25-64 who used career guidance in the past 5 years	**43%**	**40%**	

Source: 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA). For population estimates by education group, *OECD Education at a Glance 2020* was used.

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Annex D. Dedicated public career guidance agencies for adults

Austria

With Educational Counselling (*Bildungsberatung Österreich*), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research ensures the expansion and further development of provider-neutral and fee-free educational counselling for adults in all federal states. While the service is free for all adults, a particular focus is on disadvantaged, low-skilled, elderly, persons with an immigration background as well as people out of labour force. The service includes a telephone service ("*Alphatelefon*") for counselling on literacy and online counselling per email or chat. Most information is available in a range of languages.

Brussels (Belgium)

The *Cité des métiers* is a one-stop guidance service established in 2018 in Brussels with the objective of improving coordination between training, employment and education actors, and to offer more personalised advice. Their focus is on five priority themes: training, employment, mobility, entrepreneurship and guidance. It is a bilingual space (French / Flemish) in the centre of Brussels. It aims to provide lifelong guidance to job seekers, and more generally, to any citizen of Brussels: young people of school age, at school or dropping out, students, adults with or without a job as well as those with specific needs.

England (United Kingdom)

The National Careers Service in the United Kingdom provides information, advice and guidance across England to help individuals make decisions on learning, training and work. The service offers confidential and impartial advice and is supported by qualified careers advisers. The programme is open to all persons above 13 years old. Adults 19 years and over (or age 18 and out of work or on benefits) can access the service via all three delivery channels: a local face-to-face service, telephone helpline and a website. Young people aged 13 to 18 can access ongoing in-depth information, advice and guidance from the service via telephone-based advisers, or they can use web chat or the National Careers Service website. Between April 2016 and March 2017 the National Careers Service had nearly 474 000 customers. The National Contact Centre carried out 211 000 activities (these include phone calls, web chat and emails) to end March 2017 for adults, young people and intermediaries. The website averages 1.6 million visits a month. The National Careers Service is managed by the Education Skills Funding Agency.

France

The *Conseil en Evaluation Professionnel* (CEP) offers free and personalised advice to anyone wishing to receive information, advice and/or career guidance. The CEP process starts with a one-to-one interview with the beneficiary to analyse his/her skills and professional experience and is then followed by career counselling, which takes into account results from skills assessment exercises. Based on this, the adviser

and the beneficiary develop a professional plan, which includes recommended training. The beneficiary will continue to receive support from the CEP throughout the development and implementation of this personalised plan. The CEP is managed by four operators: *Pôle emploi* (PES), *Association pour l'emploi des cadres* (Association for the employment of managers), *Cap emploi* (for persons with disabilities) and *Missions locales* (for youths).

Greece

The EOPPEP is the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance, an all-encompassing statutory body responsible for providing career guidance to all. The mission of EOPPEP is geared towards linking VET with labour market needs, upgrading people's occupational qualifications, reinforcing their employment perspectives and strengthening social cohesion. EOPPEP works under the aegis of the Minister of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Special attention is given to workers at risk, workers who are unpaid for over 6 months, suspended workers and those who are employed in sectors of the economy in recession. Services are entirely publicly funded.

Ireland

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) co-ordinates the development of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The AEGI is a DES funded initiative, which provides free educational guidance services for all adults. Nation-wide, there are 40 adult educational guidance services. They offer impartial adult education information and group guidance aiming at helping people to make informed educational, career and life choices. Only people within the DES target groups are eligible for one-to-one guidance meetings – all other adults receive group guidance.

Japan

The Japanese Government established Career Development Support Centers in 2020, allowing for online or in person career counselling sessions. Workers can register online or by phone for these sessions, which are provided by career guidance counsellors selected through a call for tender. Counsellors offer face-to-face counselling, but workers can also discuss with counsellors via ZOOM. Guidance sessions are mostly targeted at certain groups (e.g. young workers, older workers, and workers in SMEs) but anyone has the right to register. With the aim to promote the development of human resources and the retention of employees in the workplace, the Career Development Support Centers assist workers to use job cards for employees and help companies introducing job cards and the self-career dock system. Today there are 37 Career Development Support Centers across the country. Although this is a government programme, it is outsourced to private companies and is implemented by career consultants in the private sector (OECD, 2021[1]).

Korea

The government introduced the Employment Success Package Program (ESPP) scheme in 2009 to foster employment of low-income disadvantaged groups, such as recipients of the Basic Livelihood Security Program (BLSP), as well as near poverty groups. It is an employment support service providing benefits to disadvantaged jobseekers not entitled to the employment insurance, participating in ALMPs. ESPP offers individualised services for job seekers, providing tailored services for up to one year by allocating a designated counsellor. Funding coming from general taxation and thus being dependent on economic

fluctuation shall be improved in 2021 by implementing the Act on the Employment Promotion and Livelihood Support for Jobseekers and legalizing the implementation of National Employment Support Scheme from January 2021.

Luxembourg

The House of Guidance (*Maison de l'Orientation*) in Luxembourg provides a one-stop shop for education and labour market orientation. Five information services and two associations are brought together in the same building to improve efficiency and coordination. Specialists and experts are also present in the building to first help citizens identify their interests, skills and competencies, and then use the information collected to provide them with career and academic advice. The Centre also helps citizens find professional training in line with their profile and support them in their career development process. Previously targeted at a younger age group, there has been a greater focus on adult learners since 2017. The mission for the Centre is to provide assistance and guidance to all citizens, regardless of their age, who are looking for advice on developing their academic or professional life.

Slovenia

Regional guidance centres – in Slovenia, called "centres ISIO" – are present as independent units in 17 folk high schools (across the whole country). The centres focus on local needs of various target groups of adults. The main goal is to provide free high quality information and guidance for all adults in the regional/local environment. Guidance support is offered in all phases of the learning process: before making the decision for learning, in the process of education and learning and follow-up. The second goal is to connect different partners in the "regional guidance network". The programme is operated by the Slovenian Centre for Adult Education, and financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. In 2017, there were 13 399 adults in individual sessions and 4 200 adults in 357 group sessions.

West Flanders (Belgium)

The Learning Shop (*Leerwinkel*) in West Flanders Belgium is an independent one-stop shop for advice on educational options and financial support. *Leerwinkel* is aimed at all adults (18+) who want information and/ or guidance when choosing an education or training programme in (West) Flanders. *Leerwinkel* offers information about training courses but also the possibility of individual guidance or group supervision when determining the study choice, and tackling possible constraints (financial, mobility, language, etc.). The project focuses specifically on adults with low education levels, immigrants and ex-convicts. Individual guidance sessions are available based on the needs and interests of the client (ranging from information provision, information sessions to intensive counselling). Many participants come through referrals from public employment offices and immigration agencies with whom *Leerwinkel* has strong partnerships. The value-added of the programme is that it provides independent and neutral advice, which is tailored to the clients' needs and not affiliated to a particular educational institution (OECD, 2019[2]).

Wallonia (Belgium)

Established in 2003, the *Carrefours Emploi-Formation-Orientation* (CEFOs) in Wallonia Belgium are public career guidance advice centres that are free of charge and accessible to all without appointment. The objective of the *Carrefours Emploi-Formation-Orientation* is to provide guidance and assistance to its visitors with regards to job prospects and orientation. Specialists and experts are present to provide career advice and to facilitate the client's job search process. The *Carrefours Emploi-Formation-Orientation* also

organises information sessions on different occupations, and provides information about labour market needs and training requirements and opportunities. There are currently 12 CEFOs in Wallonia. The *Carrefours Emploi Formation Orientation* operate under the services of the Public Service of Employment and professional training (Forem) and its partners: AVIQ, EPS, IFAPME, Interfédération des CISP, MIRE.

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Annex E. Online career guidance portals

Austria

Online Education Counselling Austria (*Online-Bildungsberatung Österreich*) targets adults with questions on education and occupational issues. All advisory services are confidential and free of charge. Another portal (erwachsenenbildung.at) is a one-stop-shop for every individual looking for online career or educational guidance, financing, education offers, information connected to the (late) completion of an interrupted official qualification and the recognition of prior learning. The portal also includes specific support to low educated learners, e.g. “learning to learn”, where users receive assistance in overcoming their fear to go back to learning, for example if they previously had negative experiences in a learning environment.

Australia

The Commonwealth Government manages a number of websites that contain career information (e.g. JobOutlook). These websites include analytical tools that allow users to input their skills, interests and experience to be provided with recommendations on occupations that may be suitable for their career. The National Careers Institute’s digital platform (yourcareer.gov.au) provides an authoritative source of accurate careers information and advice on learning, training and employment pathways. Informed by education and employment data, the digital platform includes a suite of career tools to match individuals to potential careers based on their interests, experience and education qualifications. Future updates to the digital platform will introduce additional tools and functionality to assist users in navigating and managing their career.

Denmark

The Danish website *UddannelsesGuiden* (www.ug.dk) brings together information about different education options, the structure of the Danish labour market and the role of industries and businesses. It also features a Job Compass tool (*JobKompasset*), which allows individuals to learn about different occupations within sectors. The information provided for each occupation includes a description of daily activities, average income, tools or equipment used, and even the occupations’ outlook for the future. The Job Compass also directly links to the vocational courses that prepare and certify individuals in these occupations. Users can access further information and guidance easily via chat, phone or email.

Estonia

Estonia’s *minukarjäär* website (www.minukarjäär.ee) offers career guidance information about available guidance services, workshops, trainings, articles about developments in the labour market, as well as interactive tools for self-analysis and job search. The website is currently being renewed with the objective of including more interactive options.

The education portal (haridusportaal.edu.ee) provides information about the work and skills needed in the labour market in the future. Users can also find practical advice for career development and a complete overview of the Estonian education system. This way, users can identify where they are in their lifelong learning process and plan their next steps accordingly.

France

In France the "*Orientation Pour Tous*" portal is intended to precede or complement the services provided by career guidance advisors. Available information includes current issues related to training and employment (e.g. impact of the crisis, explanation of how training systems work), training courses abroad, rights according to a person's situation, links to different training organisations, as well as financial support available to attend training courses.

Greece

Greece's platform (e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr) is provided by EOPPEP, the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance, an all-encompassing statutory body investing in better quality and more efficient and reliable lifelong learning services in Greece. It aims to offer innovative services supporting the career development of adults of all ages. The platform contains career information on learning, employment and mobility opportunities in Greece and other EU countries, online digital career guidance tools and exercises to develop the career management skills of adults and help them redesign their careers if they wish to do so. The portal includes an application that supports the user in drafting their own digital career portfolio. A labour market information system is also integrated on the website. Finally, the portal provides distant counselling services, to have a real time direct conversation with a career guidance counsellor. These tools allow clients to receive career guidance services through different means and at times that fit with their personal needs, while at the same time reducing the cost of career guidance provision.

Ireland

In Ireland, the publicly-funded national career information portal (CareersPortal.ie) was developed as a direct response to a report generated by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) in 2007. It is a central one-stop portal for students, adult learners, jobseekers, parents and career guidance professionals. The free services include: a personal career file to assist in planning and managing the individual's career development; analysis on 33 employment sectors highlighting skills shortages, associated educational courses, sector news and links to job vacancies in each of the sectors; an occupational database; employer profiles and interviews with jobholders in the respective sectors on their experiences working there.

Korea

HRD-net is a website launched in 2002 by the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MoEL) that provides a wealth of information on subsidised training programmes available, including on the duration of the course, training costs, as well as training quality information. Quality indicators include completion rates, satisfaction of participants, and acquisition of units of competences based on the National Competency Standards (NCSs). HRD-net is a successful example of an online database on adult learning: it counts over 11 million members (as of May 2018) and around 160 000 visits per day, and it acquired the Web Accessibility Quality Mark in 2018 (OECD, 2020[1]).

Lithuania

Interested users can find information on available education and training programmes, as well as qualitative information on the possibilities of distant learning, on the website AIKOS (www.aikos.smm.lt/Puslapiai/Pradinis.aspx). AIKOS is an open vocational information, counselling, and guidance system providing a wide range of users with information based on different sources, such as public, departmental, and other databases and registers.

New Zealand

Set in 2014 by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Occupation Outlook is a mobile app that allows users to explore study and career options, with extensive information on labour supply and demand in over 100 occupations, covering around 90% of employment in the labour market. Each occupation has three dials that indicate its relative income, fees, and job prospects. These can be sorted by highest to lowest and tapped on to reveal a wealth of content about education requirements, average incomes, and employment growth. The app now also has a subject-levels-to-occupation matching tool that the user can use to indicate his/her desired level of education in key subject areas and get back matching occupations. The app also provides information on the qualifications needed for the job, the institutions (e.g. universities, training providers) where it is possible to obtain such qualifications, and the average cost of study. Occupation Outlook is designed to help students make well-informed study and career choices, but it is open to everyone.

Portugal

The Portuguese Vi@s portal aims at strengthening people's self-management of their careers. It provides information to support self-knowledge, soft skills development, entrepreneurship, exploration of different professions and job and training search. The information on the website is accompanied by exploratory activities, such as questionnaires, self-assessment and reflection exercises. It will be integrated later in 2020 in the IEFP interactive services portal (https://iefponline.iefp.pt/).

Spain

The PES in Spain, *Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal* (SEPE), runs a dedicated online platform for career guidance (www.sepe.es). Based on the individual characteristics of a person (e.g. employed, unemployed, young or older worker), the website provides the person with indicators of skills demand and supply (e.g. job vacancy, wages, occupations in shortages), with suitable education and training programmes and with information on training providers or programmes and their quality (e.g. satisfaction rates, employment rates after graduation). Soon a tool will be added that helps individuals better understand their skills with the help of digital profiling tools based on artificial intelligence.

Sweden

A number of online portals focus on different key areas within the career guidance field. The publicly-funded national education portal (Utbildningsinfo.se) provides more general information on education and includes a search tool for education programmes in Sweden, a web-based career guidance tool, a description of the Swedish school system, a personal folder and a special section for guidance practitioners. Another platform (Studera.nu) informs interested candidates about higher education options. These two platforms are complemented by online information provided by the Swedish public employment

service, describing the different professions and offering labour market forecasts. *Arbetsförmedlingen*, the Swedish PES, has recently relaunched a digital self-service package for career guidance and is now expanding it to be used by external parties (municipalities, trade unions, social security organisations, regions, authorities). The package includes digital career guidance services that can be of use for those who are unsure about which profession to choose, those who want to know more about the current labour market, and those who want to start studying or want to take a new step in their career. The package includes self-guided career guidance, an interest guide made up of 12 questions, labour market demand and offers.

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Getting Skills Right

Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work

Career guidance is a fundamental policy lever to help adults successfully navigate a constantly evolving labour market through advice and information on job and training opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of career guidance services. Many adults have lost their jobs and require assistance navigating their career options in a changing labour market, where firms are likely to accelerate the adoption of digital technologies in the name of pandemic-proofing. But compared to career guidance services for youth, services for adults receive relatively little policy attention, and little is known of how often existing services are used. This report scopes out initiatives in the area of career guidance for adults in OECD countries, drawing lessons on how to strengthen adult career guidance systems in terms of coverage and inclusiveness, provision and service delivery, quality and impact, and governance and funding. The findings of the report build on the information collected through the 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA), an online survey of adults' experience with career guidance.

PRINT ISBN 978-92-64-86111-4
PDF ISBN 978-92-64-63163-2

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